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DPS still on the lookout for Castro. PAGE 3

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CIB now probing 3 homicides

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
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REPORTER

Manacop

The Department of Public Safety is now treating the death of missing person Jesus Pinaula Rios as a homicide, which means the department's Criminal Investigative Bureau now has three killings on its hands.

It's more of a procedural matter, though, according to assistant Chief of Police Simon Mañacop, who quickly clarified that this is usually done for death investigations. He said the decision to treat Rios' death as a homicide was made in order to make the case

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IPI, CCC settlement talks continue

» Revocation hearing set for yesterday reset again to Feb. 20, 2024

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

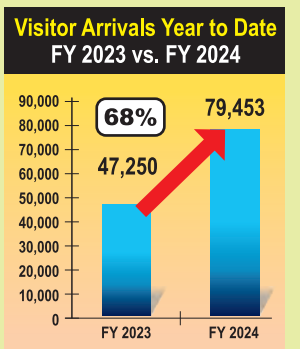
The hearing whether or not to revoke Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC's exclusive casino license has been postponed again, this time to Feb. 20, 2024, as IPI and the Commonwealth Casino Commission continue their settlement talks.

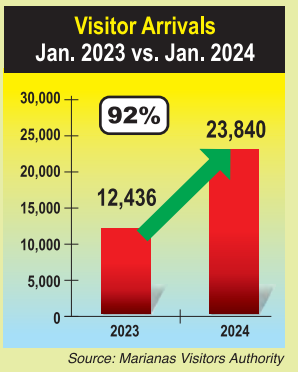
The revocation hearing was

See IPI on Page 4

Yeom

Visitor arrivals up 92% in January





Source: Marianas Visitors Authority

Arrivals to the islands of Saipan, Tinian, and Rota grew 92% to 23,840 visitors in January 2024, compared to 12,436 visitors received in January 2023, according to the Marianas Visitors Authority. Monthly arrivals were 43% lower compared to pre-pandemic levels of January 2020, when arrivals reached 55,686 visitors.

Visitor arrivals from Korea registered 16,770

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'China tourism market benefits whole CNMI economy'

» House adopts resolution to support EVS-TAP for China tourists

FERDIE DE LA TORRE
Marianas Visitors Authority board chair Gloria Cavanagh explains how beneficial the Chinese tourism market is to the whole economy of the CNMI, during the public comments portion of the House of Representatives session last Friday.

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

The Chinese tourism market will not just benefit one or two companies in the CNMI—as some people believe—but the whole economy of the CNMI, according to Marianas Visitors Authority board chair Gloria Cavanagh on Friday.

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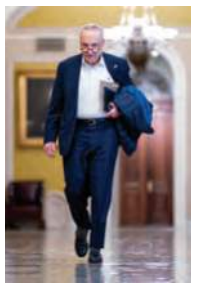
INSIDE



BUSINESS
The Senate's leaders argued in strong terms on Sunday that the money is crucial to pushing back against Russian President Vladimir Putin and maintaining America's global standing.
PAGE 11

NATION
Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin was hospitalized again Sunday to address a bladder issue as he continues to recover from prostate cancer and has transferred authorities to his deputy.
PAGE 12

LIFE & STYLE
With the run she's having, how could Taylor Swift be on anything other than the winning side?
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Local

New MPLT line-of-credit bill referred back to Senate committee

FERDIE DE LA TORRE

Sen. Dennis James C. Mendiola (R-Tinian), extreme right, shares a document with Sen. Paul A. Manglona (Ind-Rota) as Senate President Edith E. DeLeon Guerrero (D-Saipan) huddles with Senate floor leader Sen. Corina L. Magofna (Ind-Saipan) and Senate counsel Joe Bermudes during a short break in the Senate session on Friday afternoon.

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

The Senate has referred back to the Senate Fiscal Affairs Committee a bill that repeals and re-enacts a newly enacted public law that authorizes the Commonwealth government to negotiate a $15-million revolving line of credit with the Marianas Public Land Trust.

Acting on a motion offered by Senate floor leader Sen. Corina L. Magofna (Ind-Saipan) during a session yesterday, senators agreed to return House Bill 23-95, HS1, SS1, to the Senate Fiscal Affairs Committee for further discussion.

The full Senate, however, adopted the committee's report that recommends passing the legislation with amendments in the form of Senate Substitute 1.

One of the committee report's recommendations is to insert additional language to include extending the MPLT $15-million revolving line of credit to Rota and Tinian for existing or future U.S. Economic Development Administration's Capital Improvement Projects and 702 CIP annual projects within the seven-year term of the RLOC.

In response to Saipan Tribune's questions, Senate President Edith E. DeLeon Guerrero (D-Saipan) said Sunday that Friday's Senate session was delayed for over an hour because there were more discussions in relation to the MPLT RLOC legislation that requires additional due diligence work.

With the Senate's adoption of the Fiscal Affairs Committee's report, though, that leaves the current RLOC proposed amended bill mechanisms in place, DeLeon Guerrero said.

"We can all appreciate the Senate body for taking the extra steps and time to ensure that the current proposed RLOC amended bill mechanism's potential change is given the proper view and due diligence," she said.

The Senate president said a meeting before the next scheduled Senate session has been organized to meet again with the key entities involved in the proposed RLOC.

Senate Fiscal Affairs Committee chair Sen. Donald M. Manglona (Ind-Rota) and Magofna, who chairs the Senate Resources, Economic Development and Programs, and Gaming Committee set yesterday a joint meeting for this Thursday, in the Senate chamber at 10:30am.

Manglona and Magofna said they will deliberate jointly on the status of CIP-projects for the municipalities of Rota and Tinian, and House Bill 23-95, HS1, SS1.

Finance Secretary Tracy N. Norita and CIP administrator and acting Office of Planning and Development director Elizabeth S. Balajadia have been invited to the meeting.

FEMA awards CNMI $83K for emergency food and shelter

The CNMI has been awarded federal funds made available through the Federal Emergency Management Agency under the Emergency Food and Shelter National Board Program.

The CNMI has been chosen to receive $83,655 to supplement emergency food and shelter programs throughout the Commonwealth. The selection was made by a national board that is chaired by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency and consists of representatives from American Red Cross; Catholic Charities, USA; National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA; The Jewish Federations of North America, The Salvation Army; and, United Way Worldwide.

A CNMI board, made up of local community stakeholders, will determine how the funds awarded to the Commonwealth are to be distributed among the emergency food and shelter programs run by local service agencies. The local board is responsible for recommending agencies to receive these funds (Phase 41).

Under the terms of the grant from the national board, local agencies chosen to receive funds must:

1) be private voluntary non-profits or units of government;

2) be eligible to receive federal funds;

3) have an accounting system;

4) practice nondiscrimination;

5) have demonstrated the capability to deliver emergency food and/or shelter programs; and

6) if they are a private voluntary organization, have a voluntary board.

Qualifying agencies are urged to apply.

The CNMI EFSP board has distributed emergency food and shelter funds recently to Karidat Social Services, Team Koka (Tinian), The Ohala Foundation (Tinian), Abigails, Haggan/Woong United for Recovery, and CNMI Growers Association. These agencies were responsible for providing thousands of meals and hundreds of nights of lodging and utility assistance.

Public or private voluntary agencies interested in applying for Emergency Food and Shelter Program funds should contact local board chair John Hirsh at John.Hirsh@redcross.org or (670) 234-3459 for more information.

The deadline for applications to be received is 5pm on Monday, March 4, 2024. ***(PR)***

4.2-magnitude quake on Alamagan

At 1:10pm on Feb. 11, 2024, a 4.2-magnitude earthquake occurred northeast of Alamagan, Northern Mariana Islands. Currently, there are no tsunami warnings or advisories that were issued by the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center.

For more information, please contact the CNMI EOC State Warning Point at (670) 237-8000. ***(PR)***

DPS still on the lookout for Castro

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Department of Public Safety is still on the lookout for Edward Castro, who was allegedly involved in a burglary and theft incident on Capital Hill where over $126,000 worth of items were stolen.

Castro

"The search for him is still pending," said DPS assistant Chief of Police Simon Manacop.

As of press time, DPS is still on the hunt for Castro, but his two alleged accomplices in the case have been identified and brought before the Superior Court for a bail hearing.

Brandon Joel Lizama Benavente and Consalacion Villagomez Muña Sablan were brought before Superior Court Associate Judge Joseph Camacho last Thursday,

The couple previously made an appearance before the same judge for a bail hearing in relation to the discovery of drugs, a firearm, and ammunition in their residence.

According to court documents, DPS received a call on Jan. 19, reporting a burglary in progress at a two-story house on Capital Hill.

The victim, Yuan Jing, told police over the phone that she was hiding in her bedroom's restroom with her 7-year-old son because she could hear two or three individuals moving around her house.

Police arrived at the scene at around 6:34am and saw that the home's automatic car garage door had been pried open with a jack stand, two pieces of wood, a screwdriver, and a bolt cutter.

After securing the scene, police met with the victim who stated that she kept $110,000 worth of savings in her home and it had been stolen, along with her branded bag and wallet containing $1,000.

In addition, the victim said her business checks, bank cards, luggage, a brand-new iPhone 15 Pro Max, Apple AirPods, a Dell computer monitor, an HP computer monitor, an electric notebook, and jewelry had also been stolen.

That same day, the victim said she went to Bank of Saipan to cancel her checks and inform them they had been stolen, to which they told her that a woman had come in earlier to cash a check.

The cashed check was shown to Jing, which she submitted to police. The check was addressed to Sablan dated Jan. 10, in the amount of $1,500.

At around 6:23pm that same day, police learned that a couple tried to use a credit card at the Rock Steady shop and the identification card provided with the credit card had the picture scratched out.

Police got surveillance footage from the shop and identified Sablan as the same woman who had cashed Jing's work check.

On Jan. 20, the victim received a call from a man who was asking her for money in exchange for her stolen phone. The man said another man

See DPS on Page 4

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Theft charges filed vs. RISCA president

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
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REPORTER

The Office of the Attorney General, through assistant attorney general James Kingman, has filed theft and forgery charges against Ivan Mereb Jr., who is president of the non-profit group Rota Island Specialty Crop Association, or RISCA.

Kingman filed one count of theft and 15 counts of forgery charges against Mereb in Superior Court last week.

According to the information filed against Mereb, Kingman accuses him of taking over $20,000 through his position at RISCA and authorizing checks dating back from May 2021 up to April 2022.

Kingman

"On or about May 25, 2021, to April 27, 2022, on Rota, CNMI, Mereb, took, used, or consumed the property of another, to wit: U.S. currency from the Rota Island Specialty Crop Association, in a continuing course of conduct, of an amount of $20,000 or more, without the authority of the Rota Island Specialty Crop Association, by signing and issuing checks for which he was not authorized," states the information.

The offense is punishable by up to 10 years' imprisonment.

Kingman cited numerous instances relating to the forgery charges filed against Mereb. In one case, Mereb allegedly issued a check to himself on Aug. 20, 2021, worth $8,900 in RISCA funds. This alleged offense alone is punishable by up to five years' imprisonment, said Kingman.

Kingman noted 10 other similar instances where Mereb allegedly issued RISCA checks with different amounts to himself from August 2021 to December 2021. All these instances are punishable by up to five years' imprisonment each.

Kingman also filed four forgery charges against Mereb for issuing multiple checks totaling over $1,500 to Bepari Enterprises starting around September 2021 to December 2021. This is punishable by up to five years' imprisonment, said Kingman.

CHINA

From page 1

Cavanagh pointed out that, based on numbers the MVA has collected, Chinese tourists coming into the CNMI outspend Korean tourists multiple times.

Cavanagh underscored the need to revive the Chinese market to help revitalize the CNMI's tourism market during a public comments portion of the House of Representatives' session last week. She urged the House to adopt House Resolution 23-19 to express support for the CNMI Economic Vitality & Security Travel Authorization Program, or EVS-TAP, a newly created visa program for tourists from the People's Republic of China.

She said the resolution would also encourage the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to work with the CNMI government and its leaders to facilitate the responsible promotion of the Chinese tourism market.

At the same session, the House adopted House Resolution 23-19, which was introduced by House floor leader Rep. Edwin K. Propst (Ind-Saipan).

Before the House adopted the resolution, Rep. Vicente Camacho (D-Saipan) said MVA, the Hotel Association of the Northern Mariana Islands, and the Saipan Chamber of Commerce, all have accurate numbers of Chinese tourists that are coming into the CNMI.

"So the question is, do these three entities, to include Homeland Security and Immigration, have accurate numbers of tourists that overstayed or have not left the CNMI since their arrival into the CNMI?" asked Camacho.

During the public comments portion of the session, Cavanagh said House Resolution 23-19 also expresses support for Annex 6, which would exempt the CNMI from the cap on direct flights between the U.S. and China.

This arises out of Article 6 of the 2007 U.S.-China Air Transport Agreement, which states that the airlines of the U.S. may provide unlimited scheduled air services between three points in the People Republic of China and Guam and the CNMI.

Cavanagh said Annex Six basically gives the CNMI the opportunity to receive direct flights from China without having to go through the 2007 U.S.-China Air Transport Agreement between the U.S. and China.

She said this was basically an agreement that was done in 2007 because the CNMI was about to go through federalization to allow the CNMI to actually get these direct flights outside of this quota in order to have a sustainable economy.

The MVA board chair said some people have said this will only benefit two companies.

"That's never been the case," Cavanagh said.

When looking at higher-end hotels, she said, 40% of Kensington's occupancy is made up of Chinese tourists, 30% of Aqua Resort's occupancy is Chinese, and 70% of Hyatt Regency's occupancy at any given point is Chinese.

She said Chinese visitors also actually go out and patronize other restaurants.

"They don't have breakfast, lunch, and dinner at Hyatt or at Fiesta (Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan) all the time," Cavanagh said.

She said Chinese tourists also go out shopping, so a very high percentage of DFS' revenue is from Chinese market.

She pointed out that it was in the newspaper just a few months ago that the Chinese market outspends the Korean market three times when it comes to DFS.

Cavanagh noted that another fallacy is that the Chinese market is very cheap.

"The reason why you have these occupancy rates in the higher-end hotels is that they [Chinese] pay more," she said.

Cavanagh urged lawmakers to study the tourism market and ask people who are actually in the market.

"The idea that it will only benefit two companies is wrong. The idea that that it's not shared amongst all of the restaurants in Garapan and shopping is wrong," she added.

CIB

From page 1

a top priority.

"This does not necessarily mean that this case was a[n actual] homicide. This is done with death investigations, especially with ones where the death may be questionable," he said.

This is on top of two other open homicide cases that CIB is investigating. That means DPS now has three homicide cases in the last two months alone. The gruesome murder of partners Jing Dong Wang and Shuping Liu are the first two homicides this year.

Previously, Mañacop shared that so far, the investigation into Rios' death did not uncover evidence of foul play.

With the trio of homicide investigations, DPS' CIB unit is being spread thin, Mañacop said. Currently, most of CIB's manpower are being directed toward the investigation into Rios' death.

"We're definitely short. The last [time] I was briefed, CIB has scaled down the investigators directly assigned to the double homicide. Evidence has been sent out to the Guam Police Department's Forensic Laboratory for examination. [We're] awaiting results now. With this recent death investigation, most detectives are again diverted to prioritize this investigation," he said.

According to *Saipan Tribune* archives, the body of Rios, who had been missing for over a week, was found last Feb. 10 at 10am in a state of decomposition near a compound in As Lito.

"Preliminary investigations reveal that a witness who resides in the compound was mowing grass when he smelled the odor of what he initially thought was that of a decomposing dead animal. Witnesses decided to check on the two goats that belong to the family when he discovered a dead person in a state of decomposition. DPS was then notified of the discovery. Further investigations confirmed the identity of the deceased as Jesus P. Rios, who was reported missing last Feb. 5," DPS' report states.

Rios was a 67-year-old male who was residing in Finasisu when he went missing last Feb. 5. According to reports, Rios was last seen at about 12pm on Feb. 5 by a family member who saw him go outside the home to smoke.

As for the double homicide of Wang and Liu, the couple was found brutally attacked last Jan. 4 in their residence in Finasisu. Wang was found dead at the scene; Liu died a few days later at the local hospital.

Since then, police investigators have looked into a couple of leads. DPS said they have since interviewed a few people of interest in relation to the murders and even searched for evidence at the Marpi landfill.

So far, DPS awaits forensic evidence results that could possibly give investigators more answers.

DPS continues to encourage the public to report any information they may have regarding any one of these homicide cases.

IPI

From page 1

supposed to start yesterday, Feb. 12, but *Saipan Tribune* learned that CCC board vice chair Rafael Demapan granted last Feb. 5 the parties' second joint request to move the enforcement hearing to Feb. 20.

Demapan's order states that CCC executive director Andrew Yeom and IPI, through their lawyers, asked the CCC board last Feb. 2 to reset the scheduled enforcement hearing for CCC's two complaints against IPI from Feb. 12 to Feb. 20.

Citing the amended second joint motion, Demapan said the parties are still in settlement negotiations and need more time.

He granted the motion for "good cause appearing."

IPI manager/director Howyo Chi said yesterday that the new Feb. 20 hearing is needed to allow time for settlement negotiations. He did not elaborate.

Yeom said yesterday that they need more time as "it is a complicated discussion."

IPI is represented in the settlement negotiations by attorney Michael Chen, *Saipan Tribune* learned.

Citing the matter's sensitivity, Yeom declined to disclose who are involved in the negotiations.

Assistant attorney general Keisha Blaise is counsel for Yeom.

The CCC board set the revocation originally for Jan. 31, 2024.

IPI failed to pay some $62 million in casino license fees it owes the CNMI government by the Dec. 30, 2023, deadline.

VISITOR

From page 1

visitors in January, 66% higher than January 2023. In January 2024 seat supply increased by 77% compared to January 2023, totaling 20,259 seats, and the number of flights increased 68% year-on-year to 101 flights. Direct flight service is provided from Seoul by Jeju Air, T'way, and Asiana Airlines. Asiana Airlines has announced it will extend operation of its Incheon-Saipan route beyond March, another positive sign of stable seat supply. In February, Jeju Air will operate 10 charter flights from Seoul to Saipan during the Lunar New Year holiday period. These charter flights will add 1,890 seats to the Marianas, a 10% increase compared to the regularly scheduled February seat supply.

The strong U.S. dollar and weaker Korean won and Japanese yen continue to influence travelers from those countries to choose non-U.S. destinations at this time.

The Marianas received 4,494 visitors from Japan in January 2024 compared to 438 visitors in January 2023. The significant increase was largely due to the one-day visit of the cruise ship MSC Bellisima, which brought 3,666 visitors to Saipan on Jan. 4. Overall, the number of outbound Japanese travelers making international travel was 55% lower comparing pre-pandemic December 2019 to December 2023, the latest available data.

China arrivals in January 2024 reached 827 compared to 50 arrivals in January 2023. Prior to the pandemic, China was the second largest source market of visitors to the Marianas with multiple direct flights a week. Most visitors from China are now FITs [free independent travelers] transiting via Seoul and Tokyo to the Marianas.

In January, the Marianas also received 785 visitors from Guam, 665 visitors from the United States, and a combined 299 visitors from all other markets. ***(MVA)***

DPS

From page 3

sold him the phone but it was locked and it was directing him to call her number.

At around 10:57am that same day, a man named Jack Sablan allegedly called her, stating he bought her phone and her iPad and was willing to return them for a reward.

Jing, along with police, agreed to meet with the caller at Winner's Laundry where police managed to identify Castro, who was posing as Jack Sablan.

Castro was escorted back to DPS' headquarters where he was interviewed. He told police that he had tried to sell the items back to the victim under the instruction of Sablan, saying he only did it because he owes Sablan money.

Before the suspects were detained, it was learned that they managed to use Jing's credit cards in several other stores and shops.

Sablan and Benavente were arrested on Feb. 1, when police executed a search warrant in relation to the theft and burglary case that Jing had reported. During the search, police also busted the couple for possession of methamphetamine, a firearm, and ammunition.

Palacios, Apatang lead groundbreaking for $2.1M CUC GAC Filtration System Project

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

FERDIE DE LA TORRE

Gov. Arnold I. Palacios, Lt. Gov. David M. Apatang, and Commonwealth Utilities Corp. board chair Janice A. Tenorio lead the groundbreaking for the $2.1-million Isley Field and Obyan Wells Granulated Activated Carbon Filtration System Construction Project on Japan Airlines Lane in Isley Field last Friday.

Gov. Arnold I. Palacios, Lt. Gov. David M. Apatang, and Commonwealth Utilities Corp. board chair Janice A. Tenorio led the groundbreaking ceremony for the $2.1-million Isley Field and Obyan Wells Granulated Activated Carbon Filtration System Construction Project last Friday.

The GAC Filtration System treats and removes "forever chemicals" called perfluorooctane sulfonate, or PFOS, and perfluorooctanoic Acid, PFOA, which are human-made substances that are not naturally found in the environment. They are called "forever chemicals" because they do not break down naturally. PFOS have been in existence since the early '50s and were used in firefighting foam.

CUC, in consultation with Bureau of Environmental and Coastal Quality and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, have come to the conclusion that GAC Filter Units are the most effective treatment system that is best suited for the islands for removing contaminants.

In his remarks, Palacios underscored the need to have this project because PFOS is serious contaminant to CUC's water lines that provide water to close to 70% of the community.

"So I want to commend CUC for pursuing this project," said the governor during the ceremony held at the Japan Airlines Lane in Isley Field.

Palacios said acting CUC chief engineer Larry Manacop fully explained the GAC Project during several meetings and briefings with the administration.

"I'm happy to join you all today because this is the project that seriously needs to get done to address the potential dangers of our water systems," he said.

Palacios commended Manacop for pursuing this project and thanked the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration and the U.S. Department of the Interior's Office of Insular Affairs for funding it.

"And I hope that at least we can begin to filter one of the most, if not the most, valuable resource of any community and that's the water resource," Palacios said.

CUC deputy executive director for Water and Wastewater Kevin Watson said PFOS contamination is not only an issue here in the CNMI, but nationwide and worldwide.

He said PFOS would cause cancer and other illnesses over a long time.

"So we are proud that CUC and our supporting agencies are doing something about it," Watson said.

CUC board chair Janice A. Tenorio said they appreciate the partnership with the federal and local governments for making the groundbreaking possible.

"Water is critical and important for each and every one of us," Tenorio said.

Travis Spaeth, who is the chief engineer/safe drinking water manager for BECQ, commended CUC on finally breaking ground on the project. Spaeth said CUC had to fight very hard to find funding and had to overcome multiple permitting issues to get this project actually to the stage after several years.

"So I commend the engineers, the operators, [and] lab staff at CUC for all the hard work they put in," he said.

The U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration put in $1.72 million for this project, while the U.S. Department of the Interior's Office of Insular Affairs added $431,604, for a total of $2.15 million, Manacop said.

He said the GAC equipment, along with the 80 tons of Garbon Media, costs $1.16 million and for the construction contract, it's $540,800 to get it installed.

The contractor is Paragon Corp., which does business as CorePlus Construction headed by Noeh Cruz and Ruel Villacrusis.. CUC's Dennis Formalejo is the project manager, assisted by junior engineer Mark Liban.

Manacop said the completion date is June 6, 2024.

Elevated concentrations of PFOS and PFOA were first discovered in some of Isley Field wells and Obyan wells in 2015, as part of regular monitoring of water groundwater quality.

In May 2016, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency issued a nationwide primary drinking water regulation to establish legally enforceable levels for PFOS and PFOA.

Manacop said the maximum health advisory limit is 70 parts per trillion for combined concentrations of PFOS and PFOA in drinking water to provide a margin of protection against its adverse health effects.

As a result of these regulations, CUC had to shut down a total of six Isley Field wells that feed the As Terlaje Tank Service Area and the Kannat Tabla Tank Service Areas and three Obyan wells that feed the Isley Tank Service Area.

The project is composed of the installation of four GAC filter units at Isley Booster 1. These units will be connected to an existing transmission line that connects 19 wells.

A flow of about 700-800 gallons per minute will go through each of the filter units for removal of PFOA/PFOS contamination.

The treated water will then flow to the As Terlaje Tank. An existing booster pump connected to the As Terlaje Tank pumps water to the Kannat Tabla Tank.

Acting CUC executive director Betty Terlaje thanked the CUC management team of operators, engineers and administrative staff, who dedicated their time and expertise to bring this project online. She also thanked the EDA and DOI for funding this project and making it possible.

"We stand united in our mission to provide clean, reliable and sustainable water resources to the people of the Commonwealth," she said.

Terlaje sad this project would not only enhance public health and well-being but will also contribute overall economic development of the islands.

TINIAN-BOUND U.S. MARINE CORPS/LANCE CPL. DAVID GETZ

U.S. Marines with Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 232 board a KC-130J Super Hercules aircraft with Marine Aerial Refueler Transport Squadron 153 during Cope North 24 at Andersen Air Force Base, Guam, Feb. 08, 2024. Marines of Marine Aircraft Group 12 traveled from Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan, and trained at Tinian during their participation in Cope North 24. Allies and partners during the multilateral exercise, Cope North 24, trained together to improve shared tactics and multilateral defense capabilities.

U.S. MARINE CORPS/LANCE CPL. DAVID GETZ

A KC-130J Super Hercules aircraft with Marine Aerial Refueler Transport Squadron 153 unloads cargo during Cope North 24 at Tinian, Northern Mariana Islands, Feb. 08, 2024. Marines of Marine Aircraft Group 12 traveled from Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan, and trained at Tinian during their participation in Cope North 24. Allies and partners during the multilateral exercise, Cope North 24, trained together to improve shared tactics and multilateral defense capabilities.

CNMI Democrats announce re-election bids of Democratic incumbents

Three incumbent Democratic Party lawmakers in the CNMI House of Representatives will be running for re-election this November.

The Democratic Party of the Northern Mariana Islands announced yesterday that Rep. Denita Kaipat Yangetmai of Precinct 3, Rep. Vicente Castro Camacho of Precinct 3, and Rep. Diego Vincent Fejeran Camacho of Precinct 1 will be seeking re-election in November so that they might continue serving the people of their respective precincts in the CNMI House of Representatives.

Rep. Edwin K. Propst of Precinct 1 already announced on Feb. 6, 2024, that he intends to run for U.S. delegate under the party's banner and will campaign for the people's vote of confidence in his bid to succeed Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan, who is retiring after eight terms in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Sen. Edith Deleon Guerrero, who ran as a Democrat and made history as the first woman to serve as Senate president, let party chair Jonathan Cabrera know that she will be leaving the party after her current term ends. "She has served the people of the third senatorial district with distinction," said Cabrera, "and we will always be grateful for her service and commitment to the people of the CNMI."

Those interested in running under the Democratic Party in November are invited to learn more about the party at www.nmidems.org. Interested individuals can also register as a democrat and learn more about the upcoming Presidential Primary at the party's website. ***(PR)***

68 complete NMTech's 'Trading Up: Hospitality' dual enrollment program

CHRYSTAL MARINO

A total of 68 PSS students pose for a photo after receiving their certificates of completion from NMTech's Trade Up: Hospitality dual enrollment program last Friday at Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan in Garapan.

By CHRYSTAL MARINO
chrystal_marino@saipantribune.com
CORRESPONDENT

Sixty-eight students were recognized last Friday at the Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan after completing the Northern Marianas Technical Institute and Public School System's "Trading Up: Hospitality" dual enrollment program.

Students from the three main high schools—Kagman High School, Marianas High School, and Saipan Southern High School—were awarded internationally recognized certifications that will allow them to pursue careers in the hospitality industry.

Of the 68 participating students, 24 graduated with honors.

KHS student Jeffery Atalig said his entrance to the program had been a sort of a mix up but still one of the "best mix up of my life." He said completing the course makes him feel accomplished and satisfied and he was able to meet inspiring people, especially Hotel Association of the NMI chair Vicky Benevente.

When asked what he learned, Atalig said, "There's a lot of jobs. Like, a lot of jobs here. You know, it's good to know the options you have. Not a lot of kids, know how many opportunities in hotel and lodging there are." He said he is open to working in hotels someday.

Soomaitah Ferdous, 18, is thankful for the program "I'm so glad I took this hospitality class. I learned a lot, and I know it's going to help me in my future endeavors."

The program was a collaborative effort between PSS and NMTech and NMTech's partner, Island Training Solutions.

During his address, PSS' Cooperative Education program coordinator Brandon Nicholas congratulated both NMTech and Island Training Solutions. "Congratulations to NMTech and their partner, Island training Solutions, for another successful semester of teaching, training, and certifying our next generation of hospitality development."

Although the CNMI's tourism industry is a little weak at the moment, Nicholas said programs like these put the CNMI in a good footing when the tourism market goes up again, when the CNMI will have the needed certified workers.

"And should these students decide to move off island, the certification can still benefit them whether in school or when looking for work," he added.

ITS owner James Arenovski echoed the thought in his remarks. "[These students can] continue their hospitality education at [Northern Marianas College] and get an associate in hospitality. Or they can go directly into the workforce. These students here are prepared now for entry-level positions within the hospitality, retail, restaurant, and tourism industries."

Arenovski said they launched this program 10 years ago, when ITS had its first American Hotel & Lodge Educational Star program in spring of 2014. At that time, they only had 15 students. "It was a pilot program, and it was a great experience."

Since then, over 1,600 students have graduated with this certification, he said. That's 1,600 people that have American Hotel & Lodge Educational Star certifications.

"This is an impressive partnership that we've had with NMTech and PSS, and people will see that continue," Arenovski said. "People have written us and talked to the instructors of how this class has helped them in their professional lives. …This program works. It provides real opportunities for the youth, and it's often talked about when we talk about opportunities…"

Triple J's Surfrider Hotel, Coral Ocean Point Resort, Pacific Islands Club Saipan, Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan, and Laolao Bay Golf & Resort were the five hotels that participated in the program, giving the students a space to have hands-on experience. They were also recognized that night.

PETITION TO ELECT FERDIE DE LA TORRE/

People line up to sign a petition to elect Rep. Edwin K. Propst, who has announced his intent to run as the CNMI's delegate to the U.S. Congress under the NMI Democratic Party this coming November. Also in the photo is former representative Christina Marie E. Sablan, who chairs the Committee-to-elect Propst. The petition signing was held during Propst's announcement at his late parents' home in Susupe last Tuesday night.

Spay/neuter your pets at ongoing SHS clinic

LEIGH GASES

Front row, left to right, Saipan Humane Society executive director Lauren Cabrera, Dr. Jessica Nelson, licensed veterinary technician Lauren Ruiz, SHS' Ruby Ma; back row from left to right, Dorsha Moreno, Kim Vasick, Shareen Mongkeya, SHS' Jehnifer Villagomez, and SHS' Lupe Attao.

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Saipan Humane Society's spay/neuter clinic at the Koblerville Community Center (former Koblerville COVID-19 Testing Center), is ongoing until Feb. 15.

As of last Friday, Feb. 9, the clinic has already done 111 spay/neuter surgeries, three amputations, and had 57 sick/wellness visits. The clinic was set up last Monday, Feb. 5, in collaboration with visiting veterinarians, SHS staff/volunteers, and the Saipan Dog Control Program staff.

The prices for spay/neuter services are $50 for male cats (neuter), and $75 for female cats (spay), or male/female dogs. Price varies for specialty surgeries (amputation, eye removal, etc.).

Online registration for the spay/neuter clinic is ongoing at saipanhumanesociety.org/. From the home page, click the button that says "Request an appointment" and follow the instructions. Drop off your pets between 7:30am and 8am and the last pick-up time is at 4pm. You can also email clinic@saipanhumanesociety.org/.

One visiting veterinarian, Dr. Jessica Nelson, told Saipan Tribune last Friday that the clinic has been "wonderful." She arrived on Saipan for the first time the Sunday before the clinic and said that everybody has been welcoming and the clinic has been "wonderfully run" by SHS and DCP.

"We're just happy to be one of the little cogs in the machine, but we're not the main part—everybody else is doing the work," said Nelson.

On top of the many spay/neuter surgeries, Nelson said the clinic crew also takes care of any emergencies that come in, along with providing rabies vaccines. She is also helping and providing SHS with more knowledge "so they can continue providing the wonderful care they do." This week, they will also provide health certificates to help facilitate pets that need to get off island and just "doing whatever we can," said Nelson.

Nelson is originally from Portland, Oregon, and has previously helped with one of Guam's spay/neuter clinics. After a year of planning to assist SHS, she finally made it out to Saipan, along with veterinary technician Lauren Ruiz.

With the community coming out and getting their pets serviced, Nelson said she's impressed but not surprised that people here love their pets. "Everybody just wants what's best for their pet. …I'm just impressed with how much Saipan cares about their pets—not that I was expecting anything differently, but it's just kind of reinforcing the belief that, yeah, it doesn't matter where you are, everybody loves their pets—or even the random dog or cat on the side of the road."

As for maybe hosting another spay/neuter clinic on Rota and Tinian, SHS president Lauren Cabrera said they would need more funding as it's expensive to fly down there with all their equipment.

Saipan Welcomes Year of the Dragon

Photos by CHRYSTAL MARINO

The lions prepare to begin the dance at the Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan in Garapan last Saturday.

Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan general manager Clayton Darlington shows the Fai Chun given to him by the Saipan Chinese Association during the lion dance last Saturday.

The lion dance is set to begin as dozens of excited spectators watch at the Hyatt Regency Saipan in Garapan.

Hyatt Regency Saipan general manager Simon Graf, center, shows the blessing scroll given to him last Saturday onsite at the resort in Garapan.

Celebrating the Year of the Dragon, the Saipan Chinese Association brought the lion dance and Chinese blessings to several establishments last Saturday. Here they are seen at the Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan in Garapan.

The festive lions reach for the vegetable offering during the Saipan Chinese Association's lion dance celebrating the Chinese New Year at the Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan in Garapan last Saturday.

Hyatt Regency Saipan general manager Simon Graf is presented with a Fai Chun scroll after the lion dance at the Garapan hotel.

Phones are out as spectators eagerly wait for the lion dance to begin at the Hyatt Regency Saipan in Garapan.

The festive lion dance draws a crowd of spectators at the Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan in Garapan.

Spectators look on as the festive lions dance along popping firecrackers at the Hyatt Regency Saipan in Garapan last Saturday.

Opinion

Hafa Adai!
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The Associated Press | Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL

Biden's 'diminished faculties' a great concern

If Democrats believe Donald Trump is an existential threat to American democracy, why do they insist on sending a weakened 81-year-old Joe Biden into battle against him? That question became a bit more urgent last week.

On Thursday, special counsel Robert Hur issued his report on Biden's mishandling of classified documents. It was both damning and worrisome regarding the president's fitness for office.

Hur declined to bring charges against Biden, although he concluded the president had "willfully" retained and disclosed classified documents after leaving the vice presidency seven years ago. Hur suggested that Biden's cooperation was a factor in his leniency.

But he also noted that Biden's fading mental state was in play.

The report found that the president was a "well-meaning elderly man with poor memory" and described Biden as having "diminished faculties in advancing age." Hur speculated that the president's attorneys would potentially raise the issue of their client's "limitations" if the case went to court.

But it gets worse. The president, the report found, "did not remember when he was vice president, forgetting on the first day of the interview when his term ended ('if it was 2013—when did I stop being vice president?'), and forgetting on the second day of the interview when his term began ('in 2009, am I still vice president?'). He did not remember, even within several years, when his son Beau died."

This should be alarming enough given the current state of domestic and international events. But based on Hur's observations, it's no longer impolite to ask whether Biden is capable of carrying out the duties of the Oval Office for the next nine months, let alone through 2028.

Democrats insist Biden is sharp and lucid. Yet it's notable that he has held the fewest news conferences of any president in more than three decades. He maintains a limited campaign schedule. His handlers insist on tight control to ensure his accessibility is limited.

Hur, on the other hand, had lengthy conversations with Biden, The New York Times noted, that included "hourslong interactions with the president in controlled settings."

Biden lashed out in response to Hur's findings, but made matters only worse. "I know what the hell I'm doing," he said during a hastily arranged news conference that passed for damage control. He then referred to the president of Egypt as the leader of Mexico.

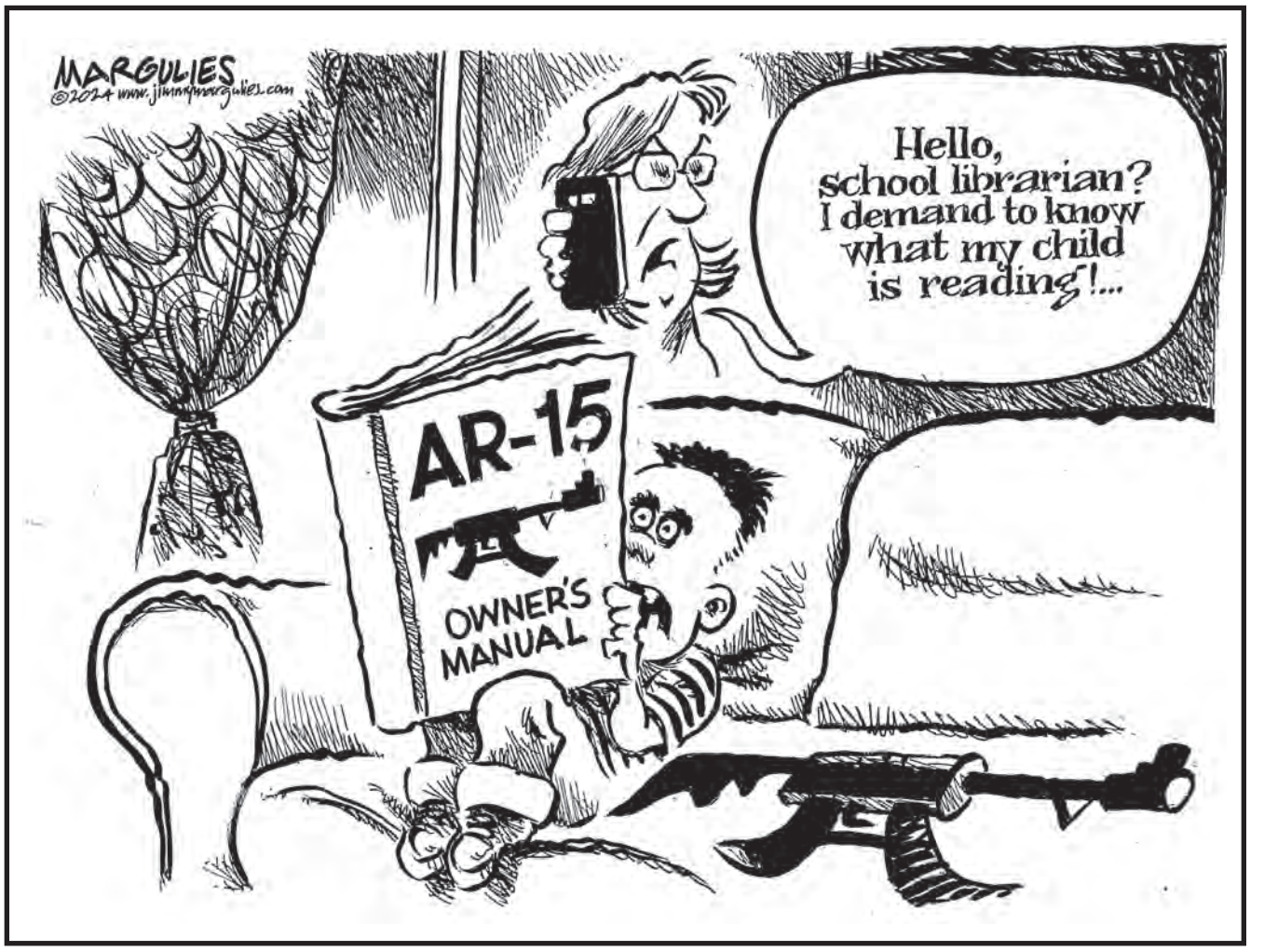
The White House, wrote CNN's Stephen Collison, has "a huge political problem on its hands."

The bind in which Democrats find themselves is exacerbated by Vice President Kamala Harris, who is drowning in the polls, with an unfavorable rating of 53 percent, according to a recent NBC News survey.

Biden may carry the day come November, but he also may be the only Democrat—perhaps along with Ms. Harris—whom the baggage-laden Trump can beat. Do Democrats want to take that chance?

Hur's bleak evaluation of the president's acuity should be of great concern to American voters. Biden simply isn't up to four

See BIDEN'S on Page 9



An Endangered Competent Congress Act

By STEVE CORBIN
The Fulcrum

Steve Corbin is professor emeritus of marketing at the University of Northern Iowa.

As a regular op-ed contributor to newspapers in 39 states, I read a lot of various and sundry topics, seeking opportunities to craft a research-based message that might be of interest to readers.

A while back I read that 2023 marked the 50th anniversary of the Endangered Species Act. Soon after, a friend referred me to a 2013 Huffington Post article by Diane Dimon titled, "There ought to be a law against an 'incompetent' Congress."

After reflecting on these two topics—endangered species and an incompetent Congress—a little humor entered the noggin, research ensued and a serious column came to fruition. Let me explain.

The ESA has saved 99% of our 2,300 endangered wildlife species and their habitats (e.g., bald eagle, peregrine falcon, gray wolf, etc.). Congress last reauthorized ESA funding in 1992. But doing so again would be a challenge because reauthorization would require a competent Congress to take action. As Hamlet would say, "ay, there's the rub!"

Despite rising polarization in Congress, researchers with the Center for Effective Lawmaking found, in longitudinal studies, legislative effectiveness is heightened when bipartisanship exists. Historians reveal we've had many competent members of Congress touted for their bipartisanship, including Daniel Webster, Henry Clay, Robert La Follette, Robert Taft, Ted Kennedy, Margaret Chase Smith, Nancy Kassebaum, William Proxmire, Henry Cabot Lodge, Sam Rayburn, and—saving the best for last—John McCain and Tip O'Neill.

Truly bipartisan lawmakers are becoming extinct. It's time for citizens to petition the government to enact the Endangered Competent Congress Act of 2024. But, we'd need a competent House, Senate and president to take action; we've not witnessed such a breed in decades.

A June 2013 Gallup survey found only 17% of their respondents approved of Congress' performance. How's Congress performing 10 years later? At the end of 2023, Congress' approval rating stood at a mere 15%.

How bad is Congress? Here are some December 2023 headlines that sum it up: "America and the terrible, horrible, no good very bad Congress" (Fox News). "Worst Congress Ever?" (The Fiscal Times). "Farewell to one of the dumbest years in Congressional history" (Politico). "Worst. Congress. Ever." (The Washington Post). "Capitol Hill stunner: 2023 led to fewest laws in decades" (Axios). "A look back at how awful politics was in 2023" (The Wall Street Journal). "This horrible Congress is even worse than you thought" (The New Republic).

Ten years ago, Dimond noted the average salary for most members of Congress was $174,000 per year plus each lawmaker received over $1.3 million per year for office expenses. She wrote, "Now, let's multiply that by the 535 members of lackluster, partisan-paralyzed Congress and you get a grand total that tops $818 million. So, what do you think? You think we're getting our almost billion dollars' worth of leadership? Yeah, me neither."

Today, congressional salaries and allowances amount to $975,540,000. The average American works 240 days a year; the House was scheduled to meet for 117 days in 2023 while senators worked 154 days.

To regain trust and confidence in our representatives to D.C., plus force them to work together on behalf of their constituents (hey, that's a novel idea) and create a more effective Congress, we must begin by reelecting those willing to pursue bipartisan solutions and de-hiring the bottom of the barrel.

Check out the nonpartisan Bipartisan Index produced by the Lugar Center and McCourt School at Georgetown. Bipartisanship scores for members of the Senate and House are listed in rank as well as alphabetical order. Reflect on the ranking of your two senators and House members, plus the lowest ranking legislators in both chambers.

Not surprisingly, lawmakers in the top tier of both chambers' rankings are about equally divided between Democrats and Republicans. Names of the least bipartisan will be quite familiar; extremists, rabble rousers and whiners to a fault.

Before the Nov. 5 election, let's campaign to get rid of 20% of the bottom-feeder and least cooperating members of Congress—regardless of their party affiliation. They've proven they can't or won't work across the aisle. "Party before people" and "After me, you come first" are their mantras. If we cleaned the deck of congressional bottom-feeders, politicians and party leaders would quickly get the message. Bipartisanship would ensue to restore an effective and productive legislative body.

Are you with me or against me in having a more functional and productive Congress? You get to decide on Nov. 5.

EDITORIAL POLICY Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

The Supreme Court seems likely to let Trump run. It will have to ignore the Constitution

By ERWIN CHEMERINSKY
Los Angeles Times

Erwin Chemerinsky is a contributing writer to Opinion *and the dean of the UC Berkeley School of Law. His latest book is* Worse Than Nothing: The Dangerous Fallacy of Originalism.

Two seemingly contradictory impressions emerged from almost three hours of oral argument Thursday before the Supreme Court: The case for Donald Trump's eligibility to be president again was quite weak, but the Supreme Court is likely to rule in his favor.

Based on the questions raised by the justices, it's hard to imagine five of them agreeing with Colorado's decision to prohibit Trump from running for president as an insurrectionist under the 14th Amendment.

The issue before the court is whether Trump is disqualified from the presidency by Section 3 of the amendment, which provides that no officeholder who "engaged in insurrection or rebellion against" the country "shall be a Senator or Representative in Congress, or elector of President and Vice-President, or hold any office, civil or military, under the United States."

The oral argument focused primarily on three questions. First, does Section 3 require a statute passed by Congress to be enforced? Several of the justices indicated support for the view that the provision is not "self-executing" and can't be enforced without a federal law. Justice Brett M. Kavanaugh, for example, said the "original public meaning" was that a statute is necessary to apply the section.

This argument is seriously flawed. To begin with, the provision doesn't need a law to enforce it any more than the other constitutional presidential qualifications do, among them being at least 35 years old, a natural-born citizen and not having already served two terms.

In addition, the amendment clearly defines Congress' role here: Its last sentence gives lawmakers the power to exempt an insurrectionist from the provision. But the amendment does not require congressional action to enforce the section.

Importantly, the Supreme Court in 1883 declared that the 14th Amendment is " undoubtedly self-executing without any ancillary legislation." The primary authority to the contrary, relied on by Trump lawyer Jonathan Mitchell and invoked by Kavanaugh, is not a Supreme Court decision but an 1869 opinion by Chief Justice Salmon Chase for a lower appellate court. As Justice Sonia Sotomayor pointed out, Chase later reached the opposite conclusion, finding that no statute was required for disqualification and that Jefferson Davis, the president of the Confederacy, was clearly disqualified from serving as president of the United States.

A second question that featured prominently in the oral argument is whether Section 3 applies to the president of the United States or only to other federal offices. Despite being ideological opposites, Justices Neil M. Gorsuch and Ketanji Brown Jackson both focused on the section's listing of several offices without mentioning the president.

The problem with this argument is that Section 3 also says "any office, civil or military." The Constitution repeatedly refers to the president as an officer. As the Colorado Supreme Court explained, senators, representatives and electors are listed as members of elected bodies who are not considered officers under the Constitution. But the president is an officer of the United States included in the phrase "any office."

The court's conservatives pride themselves on adhering to the original meaning of the Constitution, and those who drafted and ratified the 14th Amendment unquestionably saw Section 3 as applying to the president. This was explicitly stated on the floor of the Senate.

Gorsuch also noted during the argument that Section 3 precludes insurrectionists only from being president, not from running for the office. But that is an absurd distinction that could lead to dealing with whether Trump is disqualified only after he is elected, a nightmare scenario.

The third question to occupy much of the argument is whether Trump in fact participated in an insurrection. Justice Samuel A. Alito Jr. questioned the evidence for that, while Kavanaugh noted that the former president hasn't been convicted of insurrection. But a Colorado court held a five-day hearing on that question in which Trump could have testified, after which the judge concluded that he had indeed participated in an insurrection. And nothing in Section 3 or its history requires a criminal conviction.

Another pair from different ends of the court's ideological spectrum, Justices Elena Kagan and Amy Coney Barrett, wondered whether one state court should be able to make such a determination. But every case must begin in one state. Ultimately, this is not a question of one state deciding so much as it is the United States Supreme Court looking at the facts and the law—as courts always do—and deciding whether Section 3 disqualifies Trump.

This case provides the court with an opportunity to show that it follows the law and the facts, not just the political preferences of the justices. My sense from the oral argument is that we will have reason to be disappointed once more on that score.

I hope I am wrong. If the court ignores the clear language and meaning of the 14th Amendment, it will be a loss for the Constitution and the country.

Will that special counsel report light a fire under Biden the Elderly?

By JACKIE CALMES
Los Angeles Times

Jackie Calmes is an opinion columnist for the Los Angeles Times *in Washington, D.*

Sure, special counsel Robert Hur absolved President Joe Biden of any criminality in retaining classified documents after his vice presidency. But was the Republican lawyer nonetheless angling for a federal judgeship from a future Republican president—say, from a reelected and grateful Donald Trump—with the investigatory report he released Thursday?

Hur, a Trump appointee and a Federalist Society member, would hardly seem to be "auditioning" for a judicial nomination by finding that "no criminal charges are warranted" against Biden, and that there's no parallel with Trump's alleged crimes involving classified information. Except for this: Hur's exoneration of Biden has been all but lost in the attention to his grossly gratuitous words about the president's age and his "diminished faculties" during Biden's five hours of testimony to investigators.

Hur is too smart and politically savvy not to have foreseen the headlines: "Elderly man with a poor memory," blared the front page of the Murdochs' New York Post, quoting the special counsel's report.

The report was a gift to Trump and his fellow Republicans, going right to Biden's biggest weakness among voters: their doubts about the octogenarian's ability to keep doing the job. Hur conceded on the report's first page that after a year of investigation, investigators lacked evidence to make a case against the president for willfully retaining and sharing classified information. That should have been the end of it.

Instead, Hur additionally justified not bringing charges because "Mr. Biden would likely present himself to a jury, as he did during our interview of him, as a sympathetic, well-meaning, elderly man with a poor memory."

By adding that politically charged commentary, Hur violated Justice Department "just the facts" protocols, as he also should have known given the Comey precedent: In 2018, the department's inspector general slammed then-FBI Director James B. Comey for criticizing Hillary Clinton, when she was running for president against Trump, as "extremely careless" in handling classified material, even as Comey announced "no reasonable prosecutor" would seek charges against her.

How ironic: Trump is boosted again by the very Justice Department that he and Republicans otherwise allege is weaponizing the government against him.

Trump immediately put out a fundraising email embracing the report as proof Biden is even "unfit to stand trial." (As opposed to himself, fighting four indictments and 91 felony charges?) Echoing Trump as usual, House Republican leaders in a joint statement called Biden "unfit for the Oval Office." (That was rich, after their own very bad week of governing incompetence showed once again that these "legislators" are unfit for Congress.)

Republicans would be crazy not to exploit Hur's words for political gain. We'll be seeing and hearing them in Trump's political ads and speeches from now to November.

But Biden in those same months can push back. The damage is done, Democrats. Get over it, and get on with it.

Surrogates can help, attesting to the president's fitness in their private dealings with him. (Last fall, Politico reported that sincedeposed Speaker Kevin McCarthy privately told Republican allies that Biden was "sharp and substantive" in their conversations, even as McCarthy mocked the president publicly as doddering.)

But Biden's recovery ultimately requires show and tell. Only he can show skeptical voters he remains on top of things. The president can't get any younger, but he can do much more to face the public and let Americans judge for themselves.

To that end, Biden was right to speak on camera in prime time Thursday, as word of Hur's report was spreading, and to forcefully counter it. Yes, it was jarring that he misidentified the president of Egypt as being president of Mexico, but Trump recently called the leader of Hungary the head of Turkey and mixed up Nikki Haley and Nancy Pelosi seven times in a false diatribe about Jan. 6.

Biden was wrong to have declined for a second year the somewhat traditional invitation, this year from CBS, to be interviewed during the Super Bowl pregame show. "We hope viewers enjoy watching what they tuned in for—the game," White House spokesperson Ben LaBolt told Variety. OK, lots of viewers dash to the refrigerator when the president comes on screen. But that still leaves a big and diverse audience of tens of millions of people to see Biden with his wits about him.

To be fair, Biden is crisscrossing the country to meet with voters and showcase the projects made possible by laws he's signed. But he's had fewer news conferences than any president in the past century except for Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan.

Too often it seems Biden is in a staff-spun cocoon, which allows critics and supporters to infer he's being protected from making public gaffes. But what's worse, Biden's gaffes or Trump's nonstop lies?

Only Biden can demonstrate the mastery of foreign and domestic affairs that he has, thanks to his decades in public service. And show it he must.

That's how he can get reelected. And if he does, that will mean four more years in which there's no Republican president to nominate Robert Hur to be a federal judge.

BIDEN'S

From page 8

more years. Conscientious Democrats must try to persuade Biden that it would be best for the nation if he were to drop out of the race and be content with a single term in the White House.

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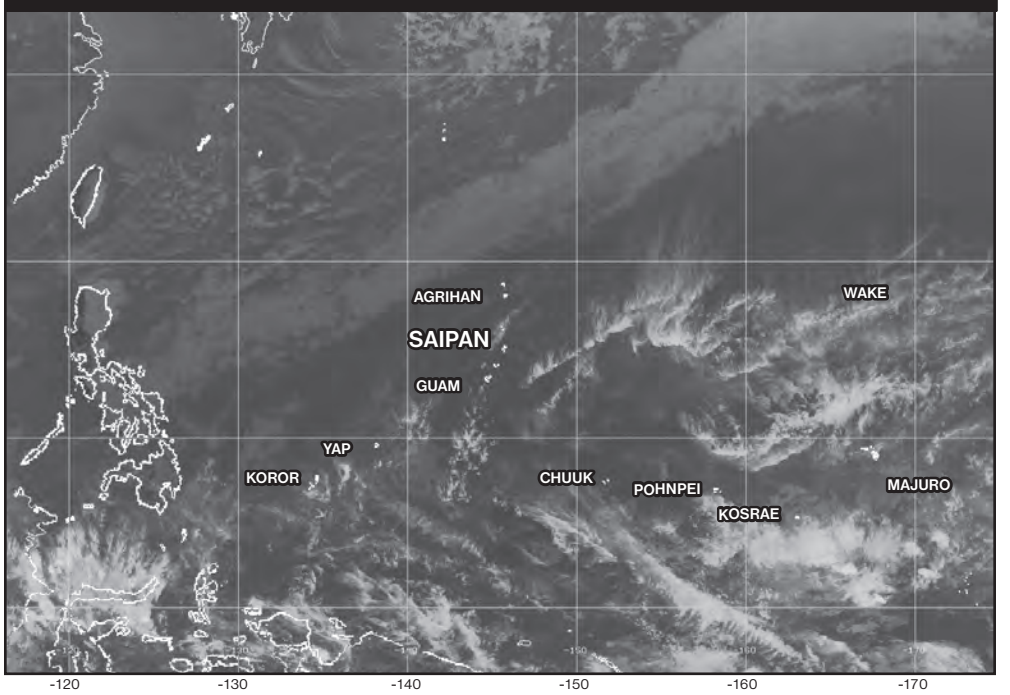
The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Breezy on tuesday. Partly cloudy with isolated light showers. Northeast winds 15 to 25 mph.	Breezy to windy. Mostly cloudy with scattered showers. Northeast winds 20 to 30 mph.	Breezy. Mostly cloudy. A 20 percent chance of showers.	Breezy. Mostly cloudy. A 20 percent chance of showers.	Breezy during the day. Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers.
85 / 77°	85 / 76°	85 / 76°	85 / 76°	85 / 76°

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 6:07 AM MONDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2024

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Satellite imagery is showing partly cloudy with hit-or-miss trade showers. Latest buoy and altimetry data indicating seas of 4 to 7 feet.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: https://www.weather.gov/gum/

MICRONESIA		▲ ▼ °F
Guam and Rota	Partly Cloudy	84° / 76°
Palau	Light Rain Shower	85° / 79°
Yap	Cloudy	86° / 79°
Chuuk	Partly Cloudy	86° / 80°
Pohnpei	Mostly Cloudy	86° / 78°
Kosrae	Mostly Cloudy	86° / 78°
Majuro	Partly Cloudy	84° / 80°

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:42 AM	6:19 PM
Wednesday	6:42 AM	6:20 PM
Thursday	6:41AM	6:20 PM
Friday	6:41AM	6:20 PM
Saturday	6:41AM	6:21 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	9:09 AM	9:40 PM	-
Wednesday	9:51 AM	10:38 PM	-
Thursday	10:33 AM	11:35 PM	-
Friday	11:18 AM	-	-
Saturday	-	12:34 AM	12:05 PM

AROUND THE GLOBE		▲ ▼ °F
Auckland	Fair	77° / 58°
Beijing	Fair	53° / 23°
Hong Kong	Sunny	71° / 58°
Honolulu	Partly Cloudy	75° / 68°
London	Cloudy	61° / 48°
Los Angeles	Clear	66° / 44°
Manila	Mostly Sunny	90° / 73°
Melbourne	Sunny	75° / 52°
Miami	Partly Cloudy	79° / 68°
New York	Cloudy	53° / 44°
Osaka	Partly Cloudy	51° / 40°
Paris	Showers	54° / 48°
Busan	Sunny	51° / 31°
Rome	Partly Cloudy	57° / 46°
Salem	Partly Cloudy	74° / 47°
San Francisco	Sunny	48° / 25°
Seoul	Sunny	45° / 21°
Tokyo	Sunny	53° / 40°
Washington, DC	Cloudy	55° / 49°

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY		FEET
4:04 AM	Low Tide	-0.21
10:26 AM	High Tide	1.90
4:44 PM	Low Tide	0.45
10:14 PM	High Tide	1.73

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF FEBRUARY 1, 2024

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA076	9:50AM	10:35AM	Daily

SAIPAN- NARITA (NRT)

UA824	7:05AM	9:45AM	1, 3, 5

GUAM-MANILA (MNL)

PR 111	5:55AM	7:55AM	Daily
UA193	7:50PM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Palau
UA183	7:55PM	9:50PM	Daily

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

OZ626/703	3:10AM	10:30PM	4, 7 via ICN
7C3403/2305	4:40AM	10:20PM	Daily
UA076/183	9:50AM	9:50PM	Daily via Guam
UA076/193	9:50AM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Guam, Palau

SAIPAN-INCHEON (ICN)

TW308	2:15AM	6:10AM	Daily
OZ626	3:10AM	6:55AM	4,7
7C3403	4:40AM	8:35AM	Daily
7C3461	2:40PM	6:45PM	Daily Feb 7-16 only
7C3405	4:35PM	8:25PM	Daily

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA174	8:00AM	8:45AM	Daily

NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN

UA825	9:25PM	2:00AM+1	2, 4, 7

MANILA (MNL)-GUAM

UA189	00:40AM	6:30AM	3, 6
PR110	10:05PM	3:55AM+1	Daily
UA192	10:40PM	6:30AM+1	2, 5 via Palau
UA184	10:55PM	4:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

UA189/174	00:40AM	8:45AM+1	3, 6 via Guam
OZ702/625	12:05PM	1:40AM+1	3, 6 via ICN
UA192/174	10:40PM	8:45AM+1	2, 5 via Palau, Guam
UA184/174	10:55PM	8:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6,7 via Guam
7C2306/3462	11:15PM	1:30PM+1	Daily Feb 7-16 only
7C2306/3406	11:15PM	3:30PM+1	Daily

INCHEON (ICN)-SAIPAN

7C3462	08:00AM	1:30PM	Daily Feb 7-16 only
7C3406	10:10AM	3:30PM	Daily
TW307	7:45PM	1:15AM+1	Daily
OZ625	8:20PM	1:40AM+1	3, 6
7C3404	10:15PM	3:35AM+1	Daily

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines; PR, Philippine Airlines; TW, T'Way Air; OZ, Asiana Airlines; 7C, Jeju Air; BX, Air Busan • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JANUARY 2, 2024

SAIPAN TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1301	SAIPAN	ROTA	08:30	09:00	Daily
1302	SAIPAN	ROTA	10:30	11:00	Daily
1303	SAIPAN	ROTA	15:30	16:00	Daily

ROTA TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3101	ROTA	SAIPAN	9:30	10:00	Daily
3102	ROTA	SAIPAN	11:30	12:00	Saturday & Sunday
3103	ROTA	SAIPAN	13:30	14:00	Monday To Friday
3104	ROTA	SAIPAN	16:30	17:00	Daily

ROTA TO GUAM

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3401	ROTA	GUAM	11:30	12:00	Monday To Friday

GUAM TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
4301	GUAM	ROTA	12:30	13:00	Monday To Friday

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1201	SAIPAN	TINIAN	7:30	7:45	Daily
1202	SAIPAN	TINIAN	8:00	8:15	Daily
1203	SAIPAN	TINIAN	9:00	9:15	Daily
1204	SAIPAN	TINIAN	10:00	10:15	Daily
1206	SAIPAN	TINIAN	14:00	14:15	Daily
1207	SAIPAN	TINIAN	15:00	15:15	Daily
1208	SAIPAN	TINIAN	16:00	16:15	Daily
1209	SAIPAN	TINIAN	17:00	17:15	Daily

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
2101	TINIAN	SAIPAN	8:00	8:15	Daily
2102	TINIAN	SAIPAN	8:30	8:45	Daily
2103	TINIAN	SAIPAN	9:30	9:45	Daily
2104	TINIAN	SAIPAN	10:30	10:45	Daily
2106	TINIAN	SAIPAN	14:30	14:45	Daily
2107	TINIAN	SAIPAN	15:30	15:45	Daily
2108	TINIAN	SAIPAN	16:30	16:45	Daily
2109	TINIAN	SAIPAN	17:30	17:45	Daily

Business

Senators push forward with Ukraine aid package

» As their leaders say the world is watching

AP

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., arrives as the Senate prepares to take a procedural vote on an emergency spending package that would provide military aid to Ukraine and Israel, replenish U.S. weapons systems and provide food, water and other humanitarian aid to civilians in Gaza, at the Capitol in Washington, Sunday, Feb. 11, 2024.

WASHINGTON (AP)—As former President Donald Trump and a growing number of Republicans oppose U.S. aid to Ukraine, the Senate's leaders argued in strong terms on Sunday that the money is crucial to pushing back against Russian President Vladimir Putin and maintaining America's global standing.

In the Capitol for a rare weekend session, the Senate voted again to move forward with the assistance as Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., and Republican leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky issued stark warnings about the consequences of abandoning longtime U.S. allies in Europe.

"Today it's no exaggeration to say that the eyes of the world are on the United States Senate," McConnell said. "Our allies and partners are hoping that the indispensable nation, the leader of the free world, has the resolve to continue."

Sunday's 67-27 vote to move forward on the $95.3 billion aid package for Ukraine, Israel and other countries comes as former President Donald Trump, the front-runner for the Republican presidential nomination, is trying to kill the assistance and has escalated his attacks on the NATO military alliance.

Trump posted on his social media platform over the weekend that the U.S. should consider loaning Ukraine money, not giving it to them, saying that "The United States of America should be 'stupid' no longer!"

And the former president said Saturday at a campaign rally in South Carolina that Russia should be able to do "whatever the hell they want" to NATO members who do not meet their defense spending targets. He recounted a story he has told before about an unidentified NATO member who confronted him over his threat not to help them.

While McConnell has made helping Ukraine a top issue, an increasing number of members in his GOP conference have followed Trump's lead and are opposing the aid, which Senate leaders have been trying to pass for months.

Without mentioning Trump by name, McConnell said in his opening remarks Sunday that "American leadership matters, and it is in question."

Schumer said that if America doesn't assist Ukraine, "Putin is all too likely to succeed."

"The only right answer to this threat is for the Senate to face it down unflinchingly by passing this bill as soon as we can," Schumer said before the vote.

Amid shortages on the battlefield, the package would provide $60 billion for Ukraine, mostly to purchase U.S.-made defense equipment, including munitions and air defense systems that authorities say it desperately needs as Russia batters the country. It includes $8 billion for the government in Kyiv and other assistance.

It would also provide $14 billion for Israel's war with Hamas, $8 billion for Taiwan and partners in the Indo-Pacific to counter China, and $9.2 billion in humanitarian assistance for Gaza.

The Senate is pushing through several procedural votes on the slimmed-down package after an attempt to pair it with legislation to stem migration at the U.S. border collapsed. Objections from Republicans adamantly opposed to the aid have delayed quick action, forcing the weekend votes as negotiations continue over potential amendments to the legislation.

Senators were still trying to negotiate a deal on amendments Sunday but it was uncertain whether they could come to an agreement that would move up a final vote. If there continue to be objections, a final vote could come midweek.

Schumer has said he is open to amendments—most of which would be likely to fail—but he forced senators to stay in session through the weekend to try and speed up the process.

"I can't remember the last time the Senate was in session on Super Bowl Sunday," Schumer said as he opened the session. "But as I've said all week long, we're going to keep working on this bill until the job is done."

In Sunday's vote, 18 Republicans voted to move forward with the measure—giving supporters optimism that it will eventually pass. But the debate over the aid has deeply divided the Senate GOP conference, with McConnell digging in to support it while some of the most adamant opponents of sending money to Ukraine have increasingly criticized the party leader.

"America is being invaded every day at our southern border," Florida Sen. Rick Scott posted on X, formerly Twitter, as voting got underway. "Why would we vote to send money and resources to secure Ukraine's border before we secure our own?"

Kentucky Sen. Rand Paul said the debt is a huge problem, "and yet they're wanting to pass a bill to send money we don't have. So it's not a sign of strength, and it's a sign of weakness."

Sen. Thom Tillis, R-N.C., said that he can understand the reservations that voters have about voting for foreign aid, but that U.S. senators, who are privy to classified briefings, should understand "what's at stake if Putin wins."

"And so some people around here if they really are being driven just by the perceptions of their base, they should grow a spine," he said.

Even if the Senate does pass the package, its future is deeply uncertain in the House, where a large majority of GOP lawmakers are firmly allied with Trump. Speaker Mike Johnson has been noncommittal on the aid and has said he wants the Senate process to play out.

Republican Sen. Markwayne Mullin of Oklahoma, a former House member who voted to move forward on the aid, noted that some members of the House have threatened to try and remove Johnson, as they did his predecessor Kevin McCarthy, if he holds a vote on Ukraine.

Still, "Speaker Johnson is now sitting in classified briefings that he hadn't had the privilege to sit in" before he was speaker, Mullin said.

BUSINESS BRIEFS

Jeff Bezos sells nearly 12M Amazon shares worth at least $2B, with more to come

SEATTLE (AP)—Jeff Bezos filed a statement with federal regulators indicating his sale of nearly 12 million shares of Amazon stock worth more than $2 billion. The Amazon executive chairman notified the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission of the sale of 11,997,698 shares of common stock on Feb. 7 and Feb. 8. The collective value of the shares of Amazon, which is based in Seattle where he founded the company in a garage about three decades ago, was more than $2.04 billion, according to the listed price totals. The stocks were grouped in five blocks between 1 million and more than 3.2 million. In a separate SEC filing, Bezos listed the proposed sale of 50 million Amazon shares around Feb. 7 with an estimated market value of $8.4 billion. Bezos stepped down as Amazon's CEO in 2021 to spend more time on his other projects, including the rocket company, Blue Origin, and his philanthropy. His address on the stock filings is listed as Seattle, although he reportedly has relocated to Miami.

PepsiCo profit gets a bump on fewer charges, but sales slip after repeated price hikes

PepsiCo got a bump to fourth quarter profits thanks in part to lower charges and continued price hikes, but higher prices have weakened consumer demand for the company's snacks and drinks. The New York company said Friday that it expects organic revenue growth of at least 4% this year, less than half the 9.5% growth that PepsiCo booked in 2023. The company's stock ended Friday down 3.6%, even as the company announced a 7% boost to its annual dividend, and said that it would buy back about $1 billion of its shares. For the three months ended Dec. 30, PepsiCo earned $1.3 billion, or 94 cents per share. That compares with $518 million, or 37 cents per share, a year earlier. Excluding an impairment charge and other items, earnings were $1.78 per share. The performance topped the $1.72 per share analysts polled by Zacks Investment Research expected. Revenue slipped to $27.86 billion from $28 billion and it was a rare miss for the company. Wall Street had projected revenue of $28.24 billion. Those revenues retreated in tandem with volume as the company got more money for products, but sold less of them. ***(AP)***

Biden's campaign joins TikTok, even as administration warns of national security concerns with the platform

WASHINGTON (AP)—President Joe Biden's 2024 campaign is now on TikTok, even though he has expressed national security concerns over the platform and banned it on federal devices.

Biden isn't expected to personally join the platform, aides said, nor the others in his administration. The account will be run entirely by the campaign team in an effort to reach voters in an ever-fragmented American population, particularly as younger voters gravitate away from traditional platforms. The inaugural post featured the president being quizzed on the Super Bowl—and included a reference to the latest political conspiracy theory centering on music superstar Taylor Swift.

Both the FBI and the Federal Communications Commission have warned that TikTok owner ByteDance could share user data—such as browsing history, location and biometric identifiers—with China's authoritarian government. Biden in 2022 banned the use of TikTok by the federal government's nearly 4 million employees on devices owned by its agencies, with limited exceptions for law enforcement, national security and security research purposes. The secretive and powerful Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States has been reviewing the app for years.

Campaign officials said they were taking advanced security precautions and incorporating security protocols to ensure safety, but they did not detail the measures—or provide information on whether the measures were meant to protect campaign data or voters'.

A law implemented by China in 2017 requires companies to give the government any personal data relevant to the country's national security. There's no evidence that TikTok has turned over such data, but fears abound due to the vast amount of user data it, like other social media companies, collects.

Biden's campaign said the BidenHQ account would be posting content regularly on the platform.

Biden's campaign maintains a presence on Meta's Threads, Instagram, Facebook, X, formerly Twitter, and Truth Social, the platform backed by Republican front-runner Donald Trump.

The president's campaign has been prioritizing social media engagements, as well as smaller events featuring the president, to reach target voters who they believe don't tune in to traditional outlets. The campaign and the White House have also stepped up outreach to social media influencers who they believe can amplify the president's message.

Nation

Defense Secretary Austin hospitalized with bladder issue

WASHINGTON (AP)—Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin was hospitalized again Sunday to address a bladder issue as he continues to recover from prostate cancer and has transferred authorities to his deputy, the Pentagon said.

Austin was diagnosed with prostate cancer in December and continues to deal with complications from his treatment.

At about 2:20 p.m. Sunday, he was transported by his security detail to Walter Reed National Military Medical Center "to be seen for symptoms suggesting an emergent bladder issue," Pentagon Press Secretary Maj. Gen. Pat Ryder said in a statement.

While Austin initially intended to retain the "functions and duties of his office," at about 5 p.m. Sunday he transferred those authorities to Deputy Secretary of Defense Kathleen Hicks. As of Sunday evening, he remained hospitalized.

A statement from Walter Reed medical officials late Sunday said Austin was admitted into the critical care unit for supportive care and close monitoring. Dr. John Maddox, the trauma medical director, and Dr. Gregory Chesnut, director of the Center for Prostate Disease Research of the Murtha Cancer Center, said while it was unclear at this time how long Austin will remain hospitalized, "the current bladder issue is not expected to change his anticipated full recovery."

AP

Kenya's Defense Minister Aden Duale, center left, speaks during a meeting with Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, center right, at the Pentagon in Washington, Wednesday, Feb. 7, 2024.

The chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff was notified, as well as the White House and Congress.

Austin was scheduled to depart Tuesday for Brussels to hold a meeting of the Ukraine contact group, which he established in 2022 to coordinate military support for Kyiv after Russia's invasion. After that, Austin was scheduled to attend a regular meeting of NATO defense ministers.

It was not immediately clear if this hospitalization would change those plans.

Austin was diagnosed with prostate cancer in December and underwent a procedure called a prostatectomy to treat it on Dec. 22.

Over the following week, he developed complications and on Jan. 1, in extreme pain, he was taken to Walter Reed by ambulance where he was admitted to the intensive care unit. Austin remained at Walter Reed until Jan. 15. He then continued to recover and work from home, and he returned to the Pentagon Jan. 29.

His doctors have previously said his prognosis against the cancer is "excellent" and that no further treatments will be needed.

Austin has gone back to Walter Reed for follow-ups since his hospitalization but this is his first unscheduled trip due to continued complications from his cancer treatments.

Austin did not tell President Joe Biden, Congress or his deputy defense secretary of his December cancer diagnosis or initial hospitalization for weeks. That secrecy has become the subject of an inspector general investigation and a Pentagon internal review. He has previously said he never instructed his staff to keep his hospitalization a secret.

NATO leader says Trump puts allies at risk by saying Russia can 'do whatever the hell they want'

WARSAW, Poland (AP)—The head of the NATO military alliance warned Sunday that Donald Trump was putting the safety of U.S. troops and their allies at risk after the Republican presidential frontrunner said Russia should be able to do "whatever the hell they want" to NATO members who don't meet their defense spending targets.

"Any suggestion that allies will not defend each other undermines all of our security, including that of the U.S., and puts American and European soldiers at increased risk," NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said in a statement.

Speaking Saturday at a rally in Conway, South Carolina, Trump recalled how as president he told an unidentified NATO member that he would "encourage" Russia to do as it wishes in cases of NATO allies who are "delinquent."

"'You didn't pay? You're delinquent?'" Trump recounted saying. "'No I would not protect you. In fact, I would encourage them to do whatever the hell they want. You gotta pay. You gotta pay your bills.'"

Trump's remarks caused deep concern in Poland, which was under Russian control in past centuries, and where anxieties are high over the war Russia is waging just across the Polish border in Ukraine.

"We have a hot war at our border," Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk said Sunday, voicing concerns about whether the United States will show "full solidarity with other NATO countries in this confrontation that promises to last for a long time with Russia."

"We must realize that the EU cannot be an economic and civilizational giant and a dwarf when it comes to defense, because the world has changed," he argued in a town hall speech marking the start of his party's campaign for local elections this spring.

In 2014, NATO allies pledged to move toward spending 2% of GDP on defense by 2024. According to NATO estimates in early 2023, 10 of its 30 member states at the time were close to or above the 2% mark, while 13 were spending 1.5% or less.

No country is in debt to any other, or to NATO.

In a statement, Trump senior adviser Jason Miller said that Trump would be able to more effectively force allies to increase their NATO spending compared to President Joe Biden, and that "when you don't pay your defense spending you can't be surprised that you get more war."

Stoltenberg said he expects that, "regardless of who wins the presidential election, the U.S. will remain a strong and committed NATO ally."

The German government did not officially comment on Trump's remarks, but its foreign office pointed out NATO's solidarity principle in a statement on X, formerly Twitter.

"'One for all and all for one.' This NATO creed keeps more than 950 million people safe," it said.

Trump's comments were of particular concern to NATO's front-line countries, like Poland and the Baltic states of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, which were either under the control of Moscow or fully incorporated into the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Fears there run especially high given Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Polish President Andrzej Duda, who is allied with the right-wing opposition, and who was seen as friendly to Trump during his presidency, tweeted that the Polish-U.S. alliance must be strong "regardless of who is currently in power in Poland and the USA."

He warned: "Offending half of the American political scene serves neither our economic interests nor Poland's security."

In an editorial Sunday, German daily Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung also called for European nations to spend more on defense.

It said that if Trump wins the presidency again, statements like the one he made on Saturday night "will increase the risk of Putin expanding his war. Europeans can only do one thing to counter this: finally invest in their military security in line with the seriousness of the situation."

Trump's tenure, which was marked by his open admiration for Russian President Vladimir Putin, became a near-existential challenge for NATO, an organization largely controlled by the United States. The prospect that Trump might return to power remains a deep concern among allies.

Stoltenberg was praised for his diplomatic skills in keeping NATO together during the Trump years, but the former Norwegian prime minister is stepping down. His successor is likely to be announced by the time allied leaders meet in Washington for NATO's 75th anniversary summit in July.

Under NATO's mutual defense clause, Article 5 of its founding treaty, all allies commit to help any member who comes under attack. The article has only ever been activated once—by the U.S. in the wake of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks.

NATO has undertaken its biggest military buildup since the Cold War since Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022.

ACROSS THE NATION

Woman killed after she opened fire in Joel Osteen's megachurch, boy with her shot, hospitalized

HOUSTON (AP)—A woman in a trenchcoat opened fire with a long gun Sunday inside celebrity pastor Joel Osteen's megachurch in Texas, sending worshippers rushing to find safety while two off-duty officers confronted and killed the shooter. Two other people were shot and injured, including a 5-year-old boy who was in critical condition. The violence erupted shortly before the Houston church's 2 p.m. Spanish service was set to begin, just as the rest of the country was preparing for the Super Bowl. The woman entered the enormous Lakewood Church—a building with a 16,000-person capacity that was previously an arena for the NBA's Houston Rockets—with the boy who was later hurt in the shootout with police. A 57-year-old man was also wounded. Details of the confrontation remain unclear in the hours after the tragedy, and police have not released the woman's identity or a possible motive. It's also unknown what relationship, if any, the woman had to the boy, and who actually shot him and the man. "I will say this," Houston Police Chief Troy Finner told reporters during a news conference outside the church. "That female, that suspect, put that baby in danger. I'm going to put that blame on her." The boy was in critical condition at a children's hospital, while the man was stable at a different hospital with a hip wound.

NYC imposing curfew at more migrant shelters following recent violent incidents

NEW YORK (AP)—New York is expanding a curfew to additional migrant shelters after violent incidents attributed to migrant shelter residents gained national attention in recent weeks. Mayor Eric Adams' administration will impose an 11 p.m. to 6 a.m. curfew at 20 migrant shelters starting Monday, after initially placing the restrictions at four other locations, spokesperson Kayla Mamelak said Sunday. The curfew impacts about 3,600 migrants, with the largest of the emergency centers housing nearly 1,000 migrants in Long Island City, Queens, according to a listing provided by the mayor's office. City officials initially placed a curfew on four shelters last month in response to neighborhood complaints. Mamelak said the curfews are in line with restrictions already in place at NYC's traditional homeless shelters and allow for "more efficient capacity management" of migrants in the city's care. "New York City continues to lead the nation in managing this national humanitarian crisis, and that includes prioritizing the health and safety of both asylum seekers in our care and New Yorkers who live in the communities surrounding the emergency shelters we manage," she said in an emailed statement. The additional curfews come after a spate of migrant-related violence and crime has prompted increasingly dire rhetoric from city and police officials.

World

Israeli military says it has rescued 2 hostages from captivity in Gaza Strip

RAFAH, Gaza Strip (AP)—The Israeli military said it rescued two hostages from captivity in the Gaza Strip early Monday, marking a small but symbolically significant success in its quest to bring home over 100 captives believed to be held by the Hamas militant group.

The hostages were released in a raid that included a series of Israeli strikes in Rafah, the city on the southern edge of the Gaza Strip where 1.4 million Palestinians have fled to escape fighting elsewhere in the Israel-Hamas war.

Hospital officials in Rafah said at least 16 Palestinians were killed and 55 wounded in a series of overnight airstrikes, but it was not clear how many of the strikes were linked to the hostage rescue.

Israel has described Rafah as the last remaining Hamas stronghold in Gaza after more than four months of war and signaled that its ground offensive may soon target the densely populated city. On Sunday, the White House said President Joe Biden had warned Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that Israel should not conduct a military operation against Hamas in Rafah without a "credible and executable" plan to protect civilians.

The army identified the rescued hostages as Fernando Simon Marman, 60, and Louis Har, 70, who it said were kidnapped by Hamas militants from Kibbutz Nir Yizhak in the Oct. 7 cross-border attack that triggered the war. Both were airlifted to Sheba Hospital in central Israel and were reported to be in good medical condition. They are just the second and third hostages to be rescued safely. A female soldier was rescued in November.

Monday's raid included at least 15 airstrikes, flares and Apache helicopter fire, witnesses said. Lt. Col. Richard Hecht, a military spokesman, said the operation was based on "precise intelligence," and that the site, located on the second floor of a building, had been watched for some time. He said Netanyahu joined Israel's military chief and other top officials as the raid unfolded.

Hamas militants killed an estimated 1,200 people and kidnapped 250 others in the Oct. 7 raid. An Israeli air and ground offensive has killed over 28,000 Palestinians, according to local health officials, displaced over 80% of the population and led to a massive humanitarian crisis.

Over 100 hostages were freed during a weeklong ceasefire in November. Israel says about 100 hostages remain in Hamas captivity, while Hamas is holding the remains of roughly 30 others who were either killed on Oct. 7 or died in captivity. Three hostages were mistakenly killed by the army after escaping their captors in December.

The remaining hostages are believed to be spread out and hidden in tunnels, likely in poor conditions. The rescue is a morale booster for Israelis, but it's a small step toward winning the release of all of them.

Har's son-in-law, Idan Bergerano, told Israel's Channel 13 TV that he and his wife were able to see the released captives at the hospital. He said the two men were thin and pale, but communicating well and aware of their surroundings. Bergernano said Har told him immediately upon seeing him: "You have a birthday today, mazal tov."

Israel has made the return of all hostages one of the main goals of the war. Netanyahu has vowed to press ahead with Israel's military offensive until a "total victory" that also includes destroying Hamas' military and governing capabilities.

The strikes hit around Rafah's Kuwait Hospital early Monday morning, an Associated Press journalist in Rafah said. Some of those wounded in the strikes had been brought to the hospital.

The Israeli military earlier said it struck "terror targets in the area of Shaboura"—which is a district in Rafah.

Palestinian health officials did not immediately offer any casualty information. The army said it had killed at least three militants in the raid. An AP journalist counted seven bodies.

Russia launches barrage of 45 drones over Ukraine as Zelenskyy changes more of its military leaders

KYIV, Ukraine (AP)—Russian forces launched 45 drones over Ukraine in a five-and-a-half-hour barrage Sunday, officials said, as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy continued the reshuffle of his war cabinet as the war enters its third year.

In a statement, the Ukrainian air force said it had shot down 40 of the Iranian-made Shahed drones over nine different regions, including on the outskirts of the country's capital, Kyiv.

The attack targeted agricultural facilities and coastal infrastructure, officials for Ukraine's southern defense forces wrote on Telegram. They said that a strike in the Mykolaiv region had injured one person, sparking a fire and damaging residential buildings.

Another person was injured in Ukraine's Dnipropetrovsk region when a blaze broke out due to falling debris from a destroyed drone, said the head of the region's military administration, Serhiy Lysak.

Border police in Moldova also said Sunday that fragments of a "Shahed-type drone" were found near the southern town of Etulia close to the border with Ukraine, but that the debris posed no danger to communities nearby.

"There is a suspicion that the detected drone debris is one of the drones shot down by the Ukrainian anti-aircraft system," the border police said in a statement, referencing overnight attacks launched on Friday by Russian forces on Ukraine's Izmail region.

The distance between Etulia and Izmail is about 40 kilometers (25 miles) as the crow flies. Authorities said access to the impact site has been restricted.

Moldovan President Maia Sandu posted on the social media platform X, that "Russia's war on Ukraine hits close to home in Moldova—again."

WORLD BRIEFS

Hungary's president resigns over pardon to man convicted in child sexual abuse case

BUDAPEST, Hungary (AP)—Hungary's conservative president resigned Saturday amid public outcry over a pardon she granted to a man convicted as an accomplice in a child sexual abuse case, a decision that unleashed an unprecedented political scandal for the long-serving nationalist government. Katalin Novák, 46, announced in a televised message that she would step down from the presidency, an office she has held since 2022. Her decision came after more than a week of public outrage after it was revealed that she issued a presidential pardon in April 2023 to a man convicted of hiding a string of child sexual abuses in a state-run children's home. "I issued a pardon that caused bewilderment and unrest for many people," Novák said on Saturday. "I made a mistake." Novák's resignation came as a rare episode of political turmoil for Hungary's nationalist governing party Fidesz, which has ruled with a constitutional majority since 2010. Under the leadership of populist Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, Fidesz has been accused of dismantling democratic institutions and rigging the electoral system and media in its favor. Novák, a key Orbán ally and a former vice president of Fidesz, served as the minister for families until her appointment to the presidency. She has been outspoken in advocating for traditional family values and the protection of children. She was the first female president in Hungary's history, and the youngest person to ever hold the office.

54 people are confirmed dead in a landslide that buried a gold-mining village in south Philippines

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—The death toll from a massive landslide that hit a gold-mining village in the southern Philippines has risen to 54 with 63 people still missing, authorities said Sunday. The landslide hit the mountain village of Masara in Davao de Oro province on Tuesday night after weeks of torrential rains. Davao de Oro's provincial government said in a Facebook post that 54 bodies had been recovered. At least 32 residents survived with injuries but 63 remained missing, it said. Among those missing were gold miners who had been waiting in two buses to be driven home when the landslide struck and buried them. The search operation has been hampered by poor weather and fears of more landslides. More than 1,100 families have been moved to evacuation centers for their safety, disaster response officials said. The area has been swamped by heavy rains in the weeks before the landslide struck. Earthquakes also damaged houses and buildings in the region in recent months, officials said.

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essence of a life well-lived and
honor the legacy of your loved ones
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THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

Overdrive

As winter whips EVs, Prius Hybrid makes a statement

By HENRY PAYNE
The Detroit News

HENRY PAYNE

The 2024 Toyota Prius Hybrid wil go 58 miles on a fill-up thanks to 52 mpg hybrid tech.

This has been the winter of electric vehicles' discontent. First of all, it's winter. Despite decades of predictions of snowless winters and dried-up Great Lakes, Chicago was still an icebox this January, registering subzero temperatures and wreaking havoc on EVs, which—when taken out of their natural California habitat—have a strong allergic reaction to cold.

A WGN-9 Chicago story went viral nationwide:

The subzero temperatures are taking a toll on the EV batteries, leaving drivers frustrated.

Darryl Johnson, an Uber driver, said he waited hours just to get to a charger, only to wait even longer while it charged. But the frustrations continued even after he left after he found his battery draining faster than normal.

"It's horrible ... it takes two hours to charge, then the charge leaves really quickly, so now you're back at the charger twice a day," Johnson said. "They definitely have to work on it because I'm out of this Tesla after today. I'm not going to ride it again."

Maybe he should try a Prius.

You remember the Prius? The hybrid gas-electric moral statement that launched the green car segment? It caught fire in the early 2000s as the car to be seen in if you preened green. All the cool kids had it, including Hollywood stars Cameron Diaz, Harrison Ford, Tom Hanks and Leo DiCaprio, who drove them to the Oscars to advertise their commitment to the planet. Prius introduced a new green language to our automotive lexicon: hybrid, tailpipe emissions and California high occupancy vehicle lane passes. And, of course, Pious.

The latter was the nickname non-believers gave to the Prius faithful. Pious sold like hot cakes, until it didn't. The movement moved on to pure electrics and Prius became oh-so-15 minutes ago—losing its California carpool lane status, its $7,500 tax break, its popularity for not going all-electric. Sales plummeted to 35,800 last year as the Tesla Model Y became the new green king at 385,900 sales a year.

Suddenly, the OG is relevant again. Thank Chicago.

"It's what we Prius owners have always known," said my friend Susan as we chatted on a 32-degree Michigan winter day next to her 2020 Prius Prime plug-in hybrid and my all-new 2024 Prius Prime plug-in tester. "When the battery runs out, you have to have a gas engine backup. At least until there's better electric infrastructure."

Or even when there is better EV infrastructure.

A state-of-the-art, 800-volt EV platform can add 68 miles of range in five minutes in optimal circumstances at a DC fast charger. My $42,510 tester will gulp down 500 miles in five. Oh. That'll get you from Oakland County to Mackinaw City and back with a short trip to the gas pump. Take a $40k, 272-mile-range Tesla Model 3 (the cheapest Tesla offered) on the same trip and it will require three stops and 45 minutes to recharge in ideal conditions.

Try it on a Michigan winter day that causes 40% battery degradation, and that EV trip turns into five stops taking 70 minutes. In the freezing cold. In Meijer parking lots.

"I love my Prius," said Susan, who once commuted from Oakland County to Ann Arbor and back—an 80-mile round trip that would leave a dent in the wallet in a gas-guzzling SUV.

Eighty miles is a cinch in a Tesla, especially if you put a 240-volt charger inside your nice, warm garage to charge up every night (assuming you have a garage). But that'll cost you a coupla grand on top of the Tesla price premium.

Speaking of premium, my '24 Prius plugin Prime model costs an extra $5,000 over the base hybrid model (which has even better 588 miles of range). Susan likes her Prime and its ability to go 25 miles (that number has jumped to 44 for the new model) on electricity alone—though she noted real-world range was closer to 20 in the, ahem, cold weather. Still, that's enough to get her 'round town for chores on an average day.

The most notable change from her last-gen Prius is all-new styling and chassis. Pious has gone from class geek to prom queen. The compact Toyota's coupe-like shape and crisp features have even become a brand halo—echoed in other Toyota models like the Crown and Crown Insignia SUV.

"It's really nice looking," said Susan, who also appreciated the fifth-gen car's simplified interior, compact shifter and shelving of the previous model's bathroom sink-white console (though, oddly, Prius still requires a wire to hook up Android Auto). I particularly like the raised display close to the raked windshield, which combines the duties of digital instruments and a head-up display.

To complement its handsome bod, Prius is also more athletic. Where the OG was a wet noodle, the 2024 model sits on Toyota's more rigid TNGA-C platform—making for more fun in the twisties when combines with 194 horses (220 in the Prime) from its hybrid powertrain.

Nerd-turned-jock also makes Prius more palatable compared to slightly cheaper, non-green segment stalwarts like the Honda Civic Hatchback. My favorite $27k Civic Sport, for example, starts about two grand south of the Prius, is fun to drive and sports a similar (7-ish) 0-60 mph time as the Toyota.

Prius's CVT drone is annoying compared to the Civic's—but then again, the Honda's 31 mpg fuel economy isn't in the same ZIP code as Prius's 52. Once the darling of Hollywood greens, Toyota is now as popular as Donald Trump in a diesel pickup for its emphasis on hybrids—but Prius's combo of gas range and affordability make it a more practical middle-class buy than the brand's first EV, the $44k bZ4X.

NUTS & BOLTS

- **Vehicle type:** Front-engine, front- or all-wheel-drive, five-passenger hybrid hatchback
- **Price:** $29,045 base, including $1,095 destination ($42,510 Prime plug-in XSE Premium as tested)
- **Power plant:** 2.0-liter, inline-4 mated to electric motor(s) and 0.9 kWh lithium-ion battery pack (10.9 kWh pack with Prius Prime)
- **Power:** 194 horsepower (Hybrid); 202 horsepower (Prime plug-in)
- **Transmission:** Continuously variable
- **Performance:** 0-60 mph, 6.5 seconds (Car and Driver est.); top speed, 112 mph
- **Weight:** 3,536 pounds (as tested)
- **Fuel economy:** EPA 52 mpg city/52 mpg highway/52 mpg combined (Hybrid); 50 mpg city/47 mpg highway/48 mpg combined; 588 miles hybrid range (Hybrid), 498 miles (Prime plug-in)

REPORT CARD

- **Highs:** The ugly duckling becomes a swan; drives forever in cold weather
- **Lows:** Tight headroom due to coupe shape; wireless Apple CarPlay/Android Auto, please
- **Overall:** ★★★★

Fix for Kia thefts?

Q: My Kia is one jeopardized by the social media mess and my Kia's lack of an immobilizer. The first fix offered was a software program, but apparently that fizzled. I recently got a mailer from Kia telling me there is now an offer to fix by installing an "ignition cylinder protector." Have you heard of this? Any opinion? Thought I'd ask before jumping in.

B.M., Niles, Illinois

A: Go ahead, jump in. Kia said in a statement that it was issuing a security measure in response to criminals using methods of theft seen on social media to steal or attempt to steal certain vehicles. This hardware modification—an ignition cylinder lock protector—is designed for those vehicles not eligible for the security software upgrade that Kia introduced earlier. It reinforces the ignition cylinder body and helps prevent its removal, as promoted by the TikTok challenge. The modified cylinder lock was rolled out in December. Each vehicle gets window decals informing would-be car thieves that the car is equipped with enhanced theft protection.

■■■

Q: I thoroughly enjoy your articles. How often do you, as opposed to the owner's manual, suggest rotating tires on a smaller, four-wheel-drive truck? FYI, I always mark my tires prior to a rotation. I have caught a major dealership not rotating my tires three times. The first time I was compensated with a $10 gift card and the second time with a tank of gas. This last time, I received a free, five-year extended warranty and an additional $3,000 on my trade!

M.C., Manitou Springs, Colorado

A: It sounds like you hit the jackpot. I suggest tire rotations every second oil change since it is easier to remember than the mileage suggestion in the owner's manual. You are neither the first person to mention marking the tires prior to service nor the first person to discover the job wasn't done.

■■■

Q: As a fogey I have a rant. I don't understand drivers who accelerate toward a red light only to have to come to a full stop behind the waiting traffic. Your thoughts?

J.G., Elmhurst, Illinois

A: I learned to coast when the traffic signal turns yellow or red. With luck, the light may change before stopping. For those who are annoyed by start/stop technology, this may lessen their annoyance. As a motorcycle rider, I can occasionally avoid putting my foot down, even momentarily, before proceeding. Besides, speeding to the light doesn't save a lick of time. Maybe they need a moment to respond to a text message. It does beat texting while driving.

■■■

Q: I have thought of writing several times, but thought I needed to throw in my two cents this time, regarding a couple of questions in a column carried in the Allentown Morning Call. First, I would be very careful about where I used a Mr. Clean Magic Eraser. They are mildly abrasive, which is part of the way they clean. Using one once or twice on the windshield should not have a serious impact, but regular use will etch the inside surface, hurting visibility and possibly making it more prone to misting up (due to the shallow scratches). The question writer was careful to specify the use of microfiber cloths, presumably to minimize the surface impact on the glass, but he throws those precautions out when he uses the Magic Eraser.

R.G., Allentown, Pennsylvania

A: You make some good points. Although automotive glass is pretty durable, everybody has seen windshield pitting after a few years, caused by sand and road debris striking the glass. I am not saying that I would endorse using Magic Erasers, though.

MOTORMOUTH

BY BOB WEBER
Tribune News Service

Bob Weber is a writer and mechanic who became an ASE-certified Master Automobile Technician in 1976. Weber's work has appeared in professional trade magazines and various consumer publications including Consumer Guide *and* Consumers Digest. *Send questions along with name and town to motormouth.tribune@gmail.com.*

Life & Style

Taylor Swift gets mobbed as Chiefs beat 49ers in the Super Bowl

LAS VEGAS (AP)—With the run she's having, how could Taylor Swift be on anything other than the winning side?

Swift was smothered by her celebrity suite-mates at Allegiant Stadium when her significant other Travis Kelce's Kansas City Chiefs clinched an overtime win over the San Francisco 49ers.

Earlier she strolled into the stadium by famous friends. She cuddled with Blake Lively during Post Malone's performance of "America the Beautiful" and won what appeared to be a beer chugging contest, slamming her cup down to an appreciative roar from the fans.

The pop superstar flew halfway around the world to see her boyfriend, Kansas City Chiefs tight end Travis Kelce, and his team play the San Francisco 49ers. The defending Super Bowl champions struggled through a sloppy first half filled with miscues before taking their first lead with a third-quarter touchdown—to Swift's delight—only for the Niners to regain a three-point advantage early in the fourth.

AP

Taylor Swift kisses Kansas City Chiefs tight end Travis Kelce after the NFL Super Bowl 58 football game against the San Francisco 49ers, Sunday, Feb. 11, 2024, in Las Vegas. The Chiefs won 25-22 against the 49ers.

Swift completed her trip from the Tokyo Dome to Allegiant Stadium for the game, walking through security along with Lively, Ice Spice and her mom, Andrea Swift. She later was spotted talking to Kelce's brother, Philadelphia Eagles center Jason Kelce, and NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell in one of the private boxes that reportedly cost more than $1 million. Singer Lana Del Rey joined the celeb-packed suite in time to catch Usher's halftime show.

Swift, who has been dating Kelce since the first few weeks of the NFL season, flew on a private plane across nine time zones and the international date line from the last of four shows at the Tokyo Dome in Japan to arrive about two hours before kickoff. The time change allowed her to land in Los Angeles and make the final hop to Las Vegas.

The 14-time Grammy winner walked in wearing a black outfit with a red jacket slung over her shoulder, apparently getting the memo from Kelce and many of the Chiefs. He wore a shimmering black suit, quarterback Patrick Mahomes wore a sharp black suit of his own, and even Chiefs coach Andy Reid wore a black blazer as the Chiefs leaned into the role of the villains.

"Anti-Hero" also happens to be the lead single from Swift's Grammy-winning album, "Midnights."

"She's unbelievable. She's rewriting the history books herself," Kelce said a day after last Sunday's Grammys. "I told her I'll have to hold up my end of the bargain and come home with hardware, too."

Swift began dating Kelce after he said on his "New Heights" podcast that he had tried and failed to give her a friendship bracelet during her performance at Arrowhead Stadium. Kelce then invited her to watch him perform at the home of the Chiefs, and she surprisingly showed up for their Week 2 game against Chicago.

Swift soon became a regular at games, both home and away, frequently sitting with Brittany Mahomes, the wife of Kansas City quarterback Patrick Mahomes. Swift occasionally brought along friends, including Lively and her husband, Ryan Reynolds.

"Having Taylor as a new Chiefs fan is very unique," Chiefs owner Clark Hunt said during Super Bowl week. "I don't ever do an interview without someone asking me about it. I think a lot of players and coaches on the team are in the same boat. The most important thing is we're happy for the two of them that they have found each other and have such a special relationship."

There was plenty of star power besides Swift for the NFL's marquee night. Usher's halftime show included guest performers Alicia Keys, Ludacris and Lil Jon. Reba McEntire sang the national anthem.

Few were to be under a brighter spotlight than Swift, though. Her dash from the Tokyo Dome, where she promised fans that "we're all gonna go on a great adventure," had Swifties around the world watching online flight trackers, while her boyfriend seemed to get as many questions about his relationship as the game during the run-up to kickoff.

Asked to explain the intense interest, Kelce replied: "I think the values we stand for and just who we are as people—we love to shine light on others, shine light on the people that help and support us, and on top of that, I think we both just love life."

Kelce and Swift won't have a whole lot of time together, regardless of how the game plays out.

Beyoncé drops new songs. New music will arrive in March

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Beyoncé is back with two new country tracks—"Texas Hold 'Em" and "16 Carriages."

Beyonce

After a Verizon commercial starring Beyoncé aired during the Super Bowl ended with the superstar saying "They ready, drop the new music," the question became—was she serious? Later, a cryptic Instagram video with country iconography appeared on her page, teasing "act ii" on March 29. (Beyoncé's 2022 album "Renaissance" is frequently referred to as "Act I: Renaissance.")

At the end of the clip, a plucky acoustic guitar riff plays, and Bey's unmistakable voice kicks in. She sings, "This ain't Texas / Ain't no hold 'em / So lay your cards down down down," in a Southern twang.

It appears on her official website as well. Under the "music" tab, two titles were listed—"Texas Hold 'Em" and "16 Carriages," which later appeared as full songs on Tidal, YouTube and Spotify. The first is an uptempo country and western stomp. She sings in the earworm bridge: "And I'll be damned if I cannot dance with you / Come pour some liquor on me honey, too / It's a real-life boogie, and a real life hoedown / Don't be a bitch, come take it to the floor now."

The second, "16 Carriages" is a soulful slow-burn with ascendent organs and steel guitar, Beyoncé singing an ode to hard work and legacy. "I miss my kids / Overworked and overwhelmed," she sings in the pre-chorus. "Still workin' on my life, you know / Only God knows, only God knows." A quick examination of the credits shows she may be working closely with Tony! Toni! Toné! 's Raphael Saadiq.

In a mostly fictional Verizon commercial that aired moments before the Instagram announcement, Beyoncé tried several tactics to try to break the internet.

With former "Veep" star Tony Hale playing an adviser, she opens a "Lemonade" stand, releases a saxophone album called "Let's Get Saxy," does her own version of the "Barbie" movie called "BarBey," sells a cyborg version of herself, runs for "Beyoncé of the United States," and blasts off in a rocket to become the first woman in space.

After Hale tells her none of that worked, she says on the space ship intercom, "OK, Bey ready: drop the new music."

Beyoncé was also shown soon on the telecast soon after at Allegiant Stadium watching the Super Bowl with husband Jay-Z.

Cash gift from in-law wounds husband's pride

DEAR ABBY: My sister-in-law on my wife's side stayed a week and a half with us in Florida. I love her very much, and we all had a lovely visit. She has stayed with us before, alone and with my brother-in-law. We welcome them with open arms. Family means a lot to us.

Now to the problem: After she left, I found an envelope with a thank-you card and $200 in it. I feel insulted, as they are always welcome here. We are not a B&B. This is the first time something like this has happened. We have a nice home, but my wife was complaining about money issues in front of our company. We are going through a rough patch at the moment, but we are not broke or destitute. Compared to us, my in-laws are wealthy.

My ego is bruised. We are better off than most people and are blessed with all we do have. I want to send the money back with a gracious thank-you note, but my wife says no. I am angry with her as well. Was she out of line for not keeping our money situation private?

FUMING IN FLORIDA

DEAR FUMING: Please don't be angry about the gift, which was given with love. Write the sister-in-law a gracious thank-you note, keep the money and tell her she doesn't need to give you more because your situation isn't dire. I don't think your wife was out of line—I think she was simply chatting with her sister when she made the remark.

■■■

DEAR READERS: On Dec. 6, I published a letter from "Lost in Louisiana," whose daughter's fiance canceled their wedding three days prior to the event "because she's bisexual." The parent was worried about her daughter's new choices in female partners and upset that she had lied, and requested her daughter not bring these women around. After responding to the letter, I heard from members of the LGBTQ+ community—in particular, bisexual people—saying I "could have done better" with my response.

I have since learned that the bisexual community is the largest segment of the LGBTQ+ community, the least visible and the most misunderstood. This has contributed to perpetuating the myth that bisexuality is a halfway point between straight and gay, a "stepping-stone" to people coming out as lesbian or gay, or an identity people claim in order to deny being lesbian or gay. NOT TRUE. Being bisexual simply means that the person has the capacity to be attracted to people of different genders. And because one is bisexual does not mean they cannot be monogamous.

I regret that I didn't point out to the parents that their unsupportive response may be a reason their daughter had not come out to them as bisexual earlier. Further, I could have suggested that to become a safe, loving and affirming presence for their daughter, they educate themselves about bisexuality. If they do, their daughter may be more open to hearing their concerns about her choices in partners, which is less about the gender of those partners and more about their treatment of their daughter.

LOVE, ABBY

■■■

To receive a collection of Abby's most memorable – and most frequently requested – poems and essays, send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for $8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby – Keepers Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

DEAR ABBY

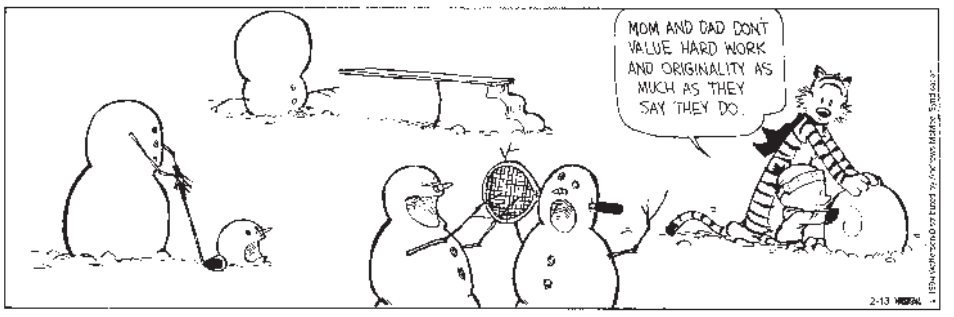
By Abigail Van Buren
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Pastimes

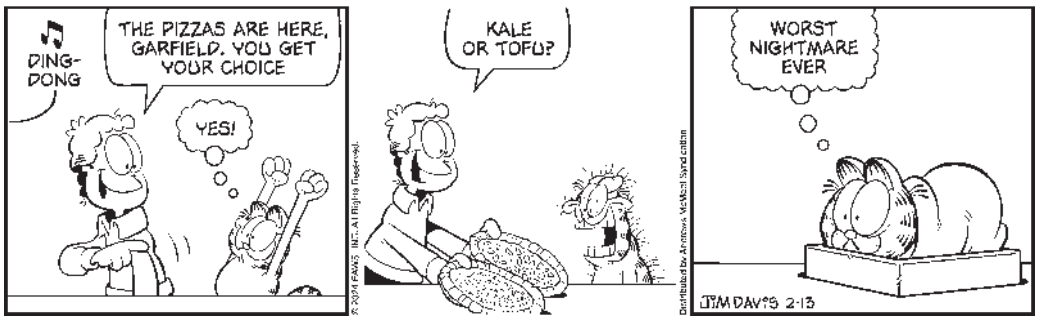
Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson



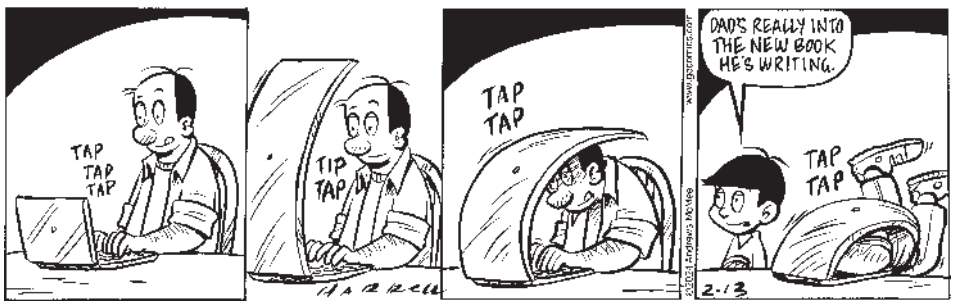
Garfield®

By Jim Davis



Adam@home

By Bryan Basset



The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy

WHAT CAN I GET YOU?
SINCE THIS IS A MEXICAN RESTAURANT, I'D LIKE TO TRY ORDERING IN SPANISH.
-SIGH-, FINE. WHAT CAN I GET YOU?
"BURRITO."

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Mani counterpart
5 Driver's lic. issuer
8 Enfold
12 Greek vowels
13 Tic-tac-toe win
14 Lofty
15 Comforting light
17 Military sch.
18 Canonized Fr. woman
19 Vintage
20 Flag features
21 Method
22 Journal
23 Ink squirter
26 Libya neighbor
30 Ringlet
31 Glitch
32 Part of speech
33 Endure
35 Swanky parties
36 Chap
37 Two, in Toledo
38 Object (to)
41 In favor of
42 Entreat
45 Wheel bar
46 Scrabble, for one
48 Talking point?
49 Deluge refuge
50 Reunion attendee
51 Writer Kingsley
52 Pigs' digs
53 Greet the villain

DOWN

1 Church seating
2 Coup d'—
3 Challenge
4 Belief
5 Country star Parton
6 Disposition
7 Pledge
8 "Seriously?"
9 Costa —
10 Petri dish gel
11 Profs' degrees
16 Incite
20 Cain, to Eve
21 Stab
22 Schlep
23 Learning ctr.
24 Status —
25 Internet address
26 Boy king
27 Harden
28 Anger
29 Sit-up targets
31 Accept, as an excuse
34 Owned by us
35 Nixon successor
37 Awkward
38 Arp's art
39 Pre-diploma hurdle
40 Roman 1052
41 Garrison
42 Indonesian island
43 Flightless birds
44 Jewels
46 Existed
47 "So frustrating!"

Solution time: 22 mins.

E	F	T			A	D	D		W	O	C	D
G	L	O	W		A	R	I		I	N	K	Y
G	O	B	I		H	A	N		N	O	S	E
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I	I	A	I	R		D	U	G		S	E	S
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J	I	M	A		E	A	T		S	A	G	E
E	P	I	C		C	P	A		H	I	R	E
W	O	V	E		E	I	S			L	E	N

Yesterday's answer 2-13

1	2	3	4	■	5	6	7	■	8	9	10	11
12				■	13			■	14			
15				16				■	17			
18			■	19			■	20				
■	■	■	21			■	22			■	■	■
23	24	25			■	26				27	28	29
30				■	31			■	32			
33				34			■	35				
■	■	■	36			■	37			■	■	■
38	39	40			■	41			■	42	43	44
45				■	46				47			
48				■	49			■	50			
51				■	52			■	53			

STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955!** 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Mena Suvari, 45; Kelly Hu, 56; Peter Gabriel, 74; Stockard Channing, 80.

Happy Birthday: Take the necessary steps to keep things running smoothly this year. You'll accomplish the most if you stick to basics, utilize everything you can and discard what you no longer need. Simplifying your life will give you the freedom to pursue what matters to you most. Don't fall short of your expectations. Change begins with you; the sooner you start, the better. Your numbers are 8, 14, 25, 27, 38, 44, 46.

ARIES *(March 21-April 19)*: Review numbers and restructure your plans to fit your budget. A passionate approach to life and your pursuits is helpful, but only if you use common sense. Accept help, but agree on the cost first to avoid problems when it's time to settle. ✪✪✪

TAURUS *(April 20-May 20)*: Take a moment to recap what's happening and to fine-tune your approach to guarantee success. A physical change that promotes better health and makes you feel good about yourself and more appealing to those you encounter will boost confidence and happiness. Romance is in the stars. ✪✪✪

GEMINI *(May 21-June 20)*: Live in the moment, be open to information and be ready to implement change. Refuse to let anyone lead you astray or restrict you from pursuing your dreams. Believe in your ability to reach for the stars, and use your versatility to grasp your goal. ✪✪✪✪

CANCER *(June 21-July 22)*: Work alongside people trying to reach the same objective. It's time to build a solid platform to execute what you want to unfold. Don't invite opposition to the table until you are ready to engage in deep debate with a foolproof plan. ✪✪

LEO *(July 23-Aug. 22)*: Ignore what you can't change and focus on what brings you joy or encourages you to take responsibility for your happiness. Use your voice to let others know how you feel. The feedback you receive will enable you to alter your course and nurture where necessary. ✪✪✪✪✪

VIRGO *(Aug. 23-Sept. 22)*: A new environment will jump-start ideas and get you moving in a direction that offers new beginnings or motivates you to take care of unfinished business. A positive attitude and persuasive tone will encourage others to pitch in and help. Partnerships look promising. ✪✪✪

LIBRA *(Sept. 23-Oct. 22)*: Home is where the heart is, and it's up to you to make it appealing. Nurture relationships to ensure the outcome consists of love, and encourage peace and happiness. Share your favorite things with loved ones, and appreciate what they share. ✪✪✪

SCORPIO *(Oct. 23-Nov. 21)*: Set high standards and work on yourself instead of trying to change others. A disciplined attitude and a vivid imagination will help you implement a positive shift in how you live and handle situations you encounter. ✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS *(Nov. 22-Dec. 21)*: Put a plan and budget in place and make alterations at home that improve life and personal relationships. Be forthcoming about what makes you happy and issues you want to resolve. Listen to complaints, suggestions and cries for help, and you'll find solutions. ✪✪✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN *(Dec. 22-Jan. 19)*: Focus on home and family and how to build equity and simplify your life. Altering your lifestyle to fit your needs will ease stress and encourage you to have more fun. Heart-to-heart talks will bring you closer to someone you love. ✪✪

AQUARIUS *(Jan. 20-Feb. 18)*: Speak from the heart when dealing with relationships, money and lifestyle changes you want to pursue. Don't let anyone convince you to spend more than you can afford or pander to their needs. Look at the big picture and create situations that work best for you. ✪✪✪✪

PISCES *(Feb. 19-March 20)*: Broaden your awareness regarding investments, lifestyle and work. It's up to you to find the balance that makes you feel content and lock in the changes that work for you. Living under someone else's umbrella isn't likely to satisfy your needs. ✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are sensitive, innovative and perceptive. You are broad-minded and talkative.

✪: Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ✪✪: You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ✪✪✪: Focus and you'll reach your goals. ✪✪✪✪: Aim high; start new projects. ✪✪✪✪✪: Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

	4							8
	3	5	7			1		4
8			2		4	6		
5		3	6		1		4	
			9		7	3	6	1
	6	7	3	4	8	2	9	5
		6			9	4		
	1				2			
4		9				7	1	

Difficulty: ★★ 2/13

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's Answer

6	4	9	1	8	2	7	5	3
8	3	5	6	7	9	2	1	4
1	2	7	5	4	3	8	6	9
3	6	8	2	1	7	4	9	5
9	5	2	8	6	4	1	3	7
7	1	4	9	3	5	6	8	2
5	8	3	4	2	1	9	7	6
4	9	6	7	5	8	3	2	1
2	7	1	3	9	6	5	4	8

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Difficulty: ★ 2/12

WONDERWORD

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the **WONDERWORD.**

FASNACHT DAY **Solution: 8 letters**

C	I	L	O	H	T	A	C	A	R	N	I	V	A	L
P	H	E	R	B	A	L	T	E	A	S	M	P	U	E
E	E	U	M	A	R	D	I	G	R	A	S	Y	S	N
N	R	T	R	N	E	H	C	T	I	K	A	N	T	T
N	I	E	B	Ⓒ	Ⓐ	Ⓚ	Ⓔ	N	S	D	Y	A	R	H
S	T	I	L	E	H	O	Z	A	S	T	U	M	I	G
Y	A	D	O	H	F	G	M	E	I	T	M	R	A	I
L	G	O	O	K	C	O	U	C	J	A	M	E	T	N
V	E	N	H	Z	L	T	R	O	L	A	Y	G	P	G
A	S	U	C	A	E	I	U	E	D	O	M	O	O	N
N	G	T	S	V	S	N	M	D	T	D	W	S	W	I
I	G	S	O	P	R	E	Y	E	P	S	E	N	D	T
A	E	R	Y	E	S	L	A	U	N	N	A	I	E	S
S	H	O	L	I	D	A	Y	B	U	T	T	E	R	A
S	W	I	T	Z	E	R	L	A	N	D	S	T	A	F

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Annual, Austria, Before, Butter, Cake, Carnival, Catholic, Church, City, Clown, Crispy, Diet, Donuts, Dozen, Dutch, Easter, Eggs, Fasting Night, Fats, Fried Dough, Germany, Herbal Teas, Heritage, Holiday, Jams, Kitchen, Lent, Mainz, Mardi Gras, Masks, Milk, Molasses, Pennsylvania, Powder, School, Shrove Tuesday, Speyer, Switzerland, Yummy

Yesterday's Answer: Toppings

To purchase **THE COLLECTED WONDERWORD, Volumes 66 through 76,** order on line at www.WonderWordBooks.com. (In Canada, call 1-855-232-2367)

Tatum has 26 points and Celtics withstand late rally to beat Heat

MIAMI (AP)—Jayson Tatum had 26 points, 10 rebounds and nine assists and the Boston Celtics withstood a late rally to beat the Miami Heat 110-106 on Sunday.

Kristaps Porzingis had 25 points, Jaylen Brown had 20 points and Jrue Holiday scored 15 for Boston, which hit 16 of 39 3-point attempts.

"Today was fun, we have a lot of history with this team. Last time we came here we smacked them, so we knew it would be a closer game," Tatum said of Boston's 33-point win in Miami Jan. 25. "They came to play and we enjoy being part of games like that. Everybody's being competitive."

The Celtics have won all three matchups with the Heat this season and have won six of the last seven games against them. The loss came in Game 7 of the Eastern Conference finals last season, when Boston forced the deciding game after losing the first three.

AP

Boston Celtics center Kristaps Porzingis (8) celebrates with forward Jayson Tatum (0) during the second half of an NBA basketball game against the Miami Heat, Sunday, Feb. 11, 2024, in Miami.

"Late-game execution, you've got to set the table," Celtics coach Joe Mazzulla said. "I think our guys did that."

Tyler Herro had 22 of his 24 points in the second half, Bam Adebayo scored 22 and Duncan Robinson and Caleb Martin finished with 15 points each for the Heat—who were short-handed to start the game and even more so by the end.

The Heat were without leading scorer Jimmy Butler, who was granted a leave of absence because of the death of a family member.

Miami lost Terry Rozier and Josh Richardson to injuries. Rozier, who finished with 13 points, landed awkwardly on his right leg after driving to the basket midway through the third quarter, clearly favoring his knee. Both players will have MRI exams on Monday, coach Erik Spoelstra said.

"It's tough to see guys like that go down," Robinson said. "And then Jimmy dealing with what he's dealing with is unfortunate, to put it lightly."

Richardson exited in the second quarter because of a right shoulder injury. He slumped to the floor in pain after his unsuccessful attempt to strip Tatum of the ball.

"I felt my shoulder pop out on the floor and then it popped back in laying on the ground, so thank goodness for that," Richardson said. "I'll know more tomorrow."

Robinson also favored his left shoulder after Brown pushed him off into the stands when both tangled for position early in the fourth quarter. Brown and Robinson exchanged words and Brown was assessed a flagrant 1 foul while Robinson got called for a personal foul.

"I just thought it was a dirty play, to be honest with you. ... Just thought it was dangerous, unnecessary and excessive," Robinson said.

Brown considered it two teams playing hard.

THUNDER 127, KINGS 113

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP)—Shai Gilgeous-Alexander had 38 points, Jalen Williams scored 32 and the Oklahoma City Thunder beat the Sacramento Kings 127-113 on Sunday.

Gilgeous-Alexander made 15 of 26 shots and had seven assists and Williams made 13 of 20 shots and had nine assists and eight rebounds for the Thunder. Oklahoma City beat the Kings for the first time in three meetings this season.

"SGA (Gilgeous-Alexander) played like an MVP candidate," Kings coach Mike Brown said. "We threw the kitchen sink at him and he still scored 38. And then Jalen Williams was really, really big. And I say he's big because he had 32 but he was extremely efficient throughout the course of the night."

Lu Dort had 17 points and nine rebounds and Chet Holmgren added 14 points for the Thunder, who scored 30 points off 18 Kings turnovers.

Oklahoma City bounced back from a 146-111 loss at Dallas on Saturday.

"I thought we were just a lot more edgy today than we were yesterday," Thunder coach Mark Daigneault said. "And I thought the guys, it's not about responding to one game, but it certainly is about us recognizing where our standards are and getting the car back on the road when we're not up to par. And I thought the guys did a great job of that today."

Domantas Sabonis had 21 points, 14 assists and 11 rebounds for the Kings, his second consecutive triple-double and his fourth in six games this month. It was his 17th triple-double of the season and 49th of his career.

Malik Monk led the Kings with 26 points.

De'Aaron Fox, who was averaging nearly 27 points per game, was held to 15 points on 6-for-17 shooting for the Kings.

"I thought Lu did a good job on him, in the first half, especially," Daigneault said. "We got him, really under control there. He has gotten loose against us. He's shot the ball incredibly well this season. … He's given us trouble obviously in the past, but I thought we did a good job on him today—Lu, and then everybody else in the help."

Former NBA player, Survivor contestant Scot Pollard waits in hospital for heart transplant

BOSTON (AP)—At 6-foot-11, Scot Pollard's size helped him play more than a decade in the NBA, earning him a championship ring with the 2008 Boston Celtics.

Now it may be killing him.

Pollard needs a heart transplant, an already dire predicament that is made more difficult by the fact so few donors can provide him with a pump big and strong enough to supply blood to his extra large body. He was admitted to intensive care at the Vanderbilt University Medical Center on Tuesday, and he will wait there until a donor surfaces who was big enough to be a match.

"I'm staying here until I get a heart," he said in a text message to The Associated Press on Wednesday night. "My heart got weaker. (Doctors) agree this is my best shot at getting a heart quicker."

At nearly 7 feet tall and with a playing weight of 260 pounds, Pollard's size rules out most potential donors for a heart to replace the one that—due to a genetic condition that was likely triggered by a virus he contracted in 2021—has been beating an extra 10,000 times per day. Half of his siblings have the same condition—as did his father, who died at 54, when Scot was 16.

"That was an immediate wake-up call," Pollard said in a recent telephone interview. "You don't see a lot of old (7-) footers walking around. So I've known that my whole life, just because I had that seared into my brain as a 16-year-old, that—yeah, being tall is great, but I'm not going to see 80."

A 1997 first-round draft pick after helping Kansas reach the NCAA Sweet 16 in four straight seasons, Pollard was a useful big man off the bench for much of an NBA career that stretched over 11 years and five teams. He played 55 seconds in the Cleveland Cavaliers' trip to the NBA Finals in 2007, and won it all the following year with the Celtics despite a season-ending ankle injury in February.

Pollard retired after that season, then dabbled in broadcasting and acting. He was a contestant on the 32nd season of "Survivor," where he was voted out on Day 27 with eight castaways remaining.

Although Pollard, 48, has been aware of the condition at least since his father died in the 1990s, it wasn't until he got sick three years ago that it began to affect his quality of life.

"It feels like I'm walking uphill all the time," he said on the telephone, when he warned a reporter that he might need to cut it short if he got tired.

Pollard tried medication, and has had three ablations—procedures to try to break up the signals causing the irregular heartbeats. A pacemaker implanted about a year go only gets to about half of the problem.

"They all agree that more ablations isn't going to fix this, more medication isn't going to fix that," Pollard said. "We need a transplant."

Patients in need of an organ transplant have to navigate a labyrinthine system that attempts to fairly match the donated organs with the recipients in need. The matching process takes the health of the patient into account, all with the goal of maximizing the benefit of the limited organs available.

"It's out of my hands. It's not even in the doctor's hands," Pollard said. "It's up to the donor networks."

To maximize his chances, Pollard was advised to register at as many transplant centers as possible—"it's increasing my odds at the casino by going to as many casinos at the same time as possible," he said. But: He must be able to get there within four hours; the need to return for post-operative visits also make it difficult to get treated far from home.

Pollard listed himself at Ascension St. Vincent Hospital in his hometown of Carmel, Indiana, and last week went through testing at the University of Chicago. He traveled this week to Vanderbilt, which performed more heart transplants last year than anyone else in the country. Pollard arrived on Sunday; on Tuesday, doctors admitted him to the I.C.U.

There, Pollard will wait for a new heart—one that is healthy enough to give him a chance, and big enough to fit his oversized frame. He had been living as Status 4—for those who are in stable condition—but now that he is hospitalized he could be eligible for Status 2, the second-highest priority.

"They can't predict, but they are confident I'll get a heart in weeks not months," he texted.

Pollard acknowledged it's strange to be hoping for a donor to surface, which is essentially rooting for someone to die.

"The fact is, that person's going to end up saving someone else's life. They're going to be a hero," he said. "That's how I look at it. I understand what has to happen for me to get what I need. So it's a real hard mix of emotions."

Until then, Pollard waits with the knowledge that the same genetic quirk that helped him a basketball star—so far, the defining achievement of his life—threatens to be a defining factor in his death.

It's something he's known since his father died.

"I've thought about that my entire life," he said. "I'm from a family of giants. I'm the youngest of six and I have three brothers that are taller than me. And people are always like, 'Oh, man, I wish I had your height.' Yeah? Let's go sit on an airplane together and see how much you want to be this tall.

"It's not like being tall is a curse. It's not. It's still a blessing. But, I have known my entire life that there's a good chance I wasn't going to get old," he said. "And so it gives you a different perspective on how you live your life and how you treat people and all that kind of stuff."

SSHS JV slip past Tinian JV; MHS Yellow win 2 in a row

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

Saipan Southern High School JV slipped past Tinian Jr./Sr. High School JV, 28-27, last Saturday in the 2023-2024 IT&E Intercholastic Boys High School Basketball League at the Marianas High School Gymnasium.

Meanwhile, MHS Yellow won two in a row, with their recent win last Saturday against Kagman High School JV, 21-19. Last Friday, they won over Tinian Jr./Sr. High School JV, 36-12.

In the Manta Rays vs. Stallions' game, the Manta Rays made it to comeback city as they won by one point over the Stallions who held the lead throughout most of the game.

SSHS JV pulled out all the stops toward the end of the game and rang in all foul shots they could take. They played the small ball as their accuracy at the free throw line proved pivotal—and despite the pressure, won them the game.

John Lucero shot the game winning free throw and earned them their second win of the season. He ended up with 5 points, while Danny Defang scored 6, and Marino Santos put up 8.

AP

In this file photo, Saipan Southern High School JV's Darnell Lizama goes for a layup during their game in the 2023-2024 IT&E Intercholastic Boys High School Basketball League at the Marianas High School Gymnasium

The Stallions' Herman Lizama led the team with 10 points as he worked the outside perimeter. Paolo Roldan had his back with 6 points, but it wasn't enough to keep the Mantas at bay.

In the Dolphins vs. Ayuyus game, it was another close one as both teams were evenly matched. The Dolphins just came from a win the day before and continued to ride on their momentum against the Ayuyus.

Rouvick Quizon and MJay Capalad scored the crucial free throws in the final minutes and held on to win their second straight game.

The Ayuyus had a strong start with a great passing game and led by 1 point at the end of the first half. But, the Dolphins Joseph Paraiso and Quizon made a sharp-shooting duo in the second half to have a slight advantage over the Ayuyus.

In the end, Capalad scored 8 and Quizon put up 6, while KHS' Bruce Tasi, Jarrod Muna, and Jerricho Pangelinan had 4 markers apiece.

In other results last Saturday, Mount Carmel School JV defeated THS JV, 35-12. Last Friday, KHS JV beat THS JV, 18-12, and MHS Blue outscored MCS JV, 33-17.

SSHS 28 – Santos 8, D. Defang 6, Lucero 5, J. Defang 4, Paul 4, Cruz 1.

Tinian JV 27 – Lizama 10, Roldan 6, Reyes 5, Sarmiento 4, Dela Cruz 2.

Scoring by halves: 8-16, 28-27.

MHS Yellow 21 – Capalad 8, Quizon 6, Cultura 3, Ferrer 2, Tabhan 2.

KHS JV 19 – Tasi 4, Muna 4, Pangelinan 4, Wessel 2, Kubo 2, Albert 2, Tenorio 1.

Scoring by halves: 9-10, 21-19.

Glen Camacho is Masters League batting champion

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

The Dodgers' Glen Camacho is the 2023 Tan Holdings-SBL Masters League batting champion after the last set of regular season games last week.

He led the season with a .652 batting average, from 15 of 23 hits. The Pirates' Audie Maratita claimed the tight race for second place with a .645 batting average, going 20 for 31 at-bats. Third place by just a couple of points is the Reds' Hector Efraim at .643, after he went 18 hits form 28 plate appearances.

Maratita also bagged the most doubles with eight, and the most RBIs with 20. Second in the doubles category is Alvin Takai and Bruce Norita with five; Ton Pangelinan and Isaac Aguon hit four; and Eric Tudela, J-Boy Deleon Guerrero, J.J. Teigita, and Shine Tenorio hit three each.

Second in RBIs is Eric Palacios with 15; Shine Tenorio and Tony Pangelinan have 14; and Bruce Norita, and J-Boy Deleon Guerrero have 13 each.

The runs scored champion is Derek Aguon with 23; James Benavente and Pete Sablan scored 21; Cartfield Sablan and Jerome DeIos Santos have 19 each; Alvin Takai has 18; and Audie Maratita has 17.

The triples champion is Cartfield Sablan with three; and Dennis Cruz, Derek Aguon, Ed Manibusan, Mike Techur, and Richard Quitugua all hit two each.

The only home runs were hit by Robert Bansil and Bruce Norita, while Maratita, Eric Tudela, J-Boy Deleon Guerrero hit inside-the-park home runs.

Over on the bump, the pitching champion is the Pirates' Pete Sablan. He pitched 11 innings over four games, had the lowest ERA of 1.91, a record of 2-0, 14 hits against him, and three earned runs.

Teammate Dung Tenorio is second after a 3.21 ERA after pitching 13.1 innings in five games, has a spotless 3-0 record, 23 hits against him, and six ER. Third is the Blue Jays' Kevin Kapileo who has a 3.84 ERA, a 4-2 record, pitched 29.2 innings in eight games, and collected 47 hits and 16 ER.

Kapileo is the strikeout king by a long shot with 51 strikeout; Joe Kapileo struck out 21; Jeff Cruz has 20; Pete Sablan and Tony Flores collected 16 each; Bill Camacho has 15; Tony Pangelinan threw out 14; Dominic Hideo and Dung Tenorio has 13 each; and J.J. Laniyo has 11 strikeouts.

In the final team standings, the Pirates clinched the pennant with 10 straight wins, the Reds pulled ahead into second place with a 7-3 record; the Dodgers were third at 6-4; Blue Jays were 4-6; Marlins settled for 3-7; and the Spartans lost all 10 games.

KYLE

From page 20

lapse in the 2016 season when he was offensive coordinator in Atlanta. The Falcons blew a 25-point lead that game and lost 34-28 in overtime to New England.

This latest one might be the toughest to take since the 49ers had the best team in the league for most of the season and seemed poised to deliver Shanahan his first championship.

"When you go against guys like Tom Brady and Pat Mahomes, you never feel comfortable with a lead," Shanahan said. "Those guys are two of the best to ever play the game."

But the Niners squandered a 10-point lead in the first half and then couldn't hold onto a pair of three-point leads late, making Shanahan the first head coach ever to blow two double-digit leads in the Super Bowl.

His 49ers also blew a 10-point lead in the fourth quarter of the 2021 NFC title game against the Rams, tying him for the most blown double-digit leads in the playoffs for a coach in NFL history.

Mahomes drove for a game-tying field goal in the final 1:53 of regulation and then a game-winning TD pass to Mecole Hardman in overtime after Shanahan opted to take the ball first in the extra session.

The Niners could only manage a field goal by Jake Moody when Chris Jones forced Brock Purdy to throw an incomplete pass on third-and-4 from the 9.

"It looked like there was a protection bust up the middle," Shanahan said. "We were going to Jauan (Jennings). It looked like Jauan killed him pretty good (on the route). But Chris Jones got loose up the middle. I think there was a mistake. I'm not sure. Obviously he's a hard guy to block."

San Francisco's defense then couldn't come up with a stop against Mahomes, allowing him to convert both a fourth and third down with his legs.

Mahomes then sent the Niners home with a loss when he found Hardman wide open after faking across the formation in motion and reversing field.

Mahomes and the Chiefs have now handed Shanahan's 49ers two Super Bowl losses in the past five seasons as the dynastic franchise from the 1980s and '90s has now gone 29 straight seasons without winning a title.

"It's part of sports, it's part of football, it's part of life," Shanahan said. "I thought we put ourselves out there. I love our team. We'll recover and we'll be back next year strong."

Now Shanahan must hope to follow the path of his father, Mike, who lost his first three Super Bowl trips—all as an assistant in Denver—before winning one as coordinator for the 49ers in the 1994 season and back-to-back titles for the Broncos in 1997-98.

TRAVIS

From page 20

After the game, Kelce said it's on to the next feat.

"I'm going to go ahead and enjoy this and everything that just happened," he said. "This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that I've been able to go through three times now. It gets sweeter and sweeter every time.

"You know the goal has always been to get three. But we couldn't get here without getting that two, and having that target on our back all year."

Kelce's vibe at the end of the game was an emphatic change after he bumped Andy Reid on the sideline during the second quarter, knocking the 65-year-old Kansas City coach a few steps back after teammate Isiah Pacheco fumbled inside the red zone.

Kelce ran over to Reid and screamed at him after the fumble.

"You guys saw that?" Kelce said. "I'm going to keep it between us unless my mic'd up tells the world. I was just telling him how much I loved him."

Reid said Kelce just wanted to be on the field. "There's nobody I get better than I get him," Reid said. "He's a competitive kid. He loves to play. He makes me feel young. But my balance is terrible."

This was the second sideline incident involving Kelce and Reid this season. During a game against the Raiders on Christmas Day, an angry Kelce spiked his helmet on the sideline, and when a staff member tried to hand it back to the tight end so that he could take the field, Reid grabbed the helmet and refused to give it back.

MAHOMES

From page 20

in the Super Bowl.

After Moody's 53-yard field goal gave the Niners a 19-16 lead with 1:53 remaining, Mahomes and Kelce went to work. Mahomes connected with Kelce for a 22-yard gain to set up Harrison Butker's tying kick, a 29-yarder with 3 seconds left.

A holding call on Kansas City's Trent McDuffie extended San Francisco's opening drive of overtime and Purdy made key throws to drive the 49ers to the Chiefs 9. But San Francisco settled for a field goal.

Purdy, Christian McCaffrey and the Niners jumped ahead 10-0, but that's no big deal for Mahomes and the Chiefs in the Super Bowl. They've trailed by 10 points in all three of their victories, including last year's 38-35 win over Philadelphia.

Mahomes wasn't at his best early and threw an interception. But with the game on the line, he was a magician once again. He finished 34 of 46 for 333 yards and two TDs.

The Chiefs were hardly dominant during the regular season and entered the playoffs as the AFC's No. 3 seed. They won at Buffalo and at Baltimore in the postseason—the first road playoff games of Mahomes' career—and entered the Super Bowl as 2 1/2-point underdogs, according to FanDuel Sportsbook.

"The Kansas City Chiefs are never underdogs. Just know that," Mahomes said.

The game turned when San Francisco's Ray-Ray McCloud couldn't scoop a punt that hit teammate Darrell Luter Jr.'s leg and the Chiefs recovered at the 49ers 16, leading to Mahomes' go-ahead TD pass to Valdes-Scantling.

The Niners answered on the next possession with Purdy tossing a 10-yard TD pass to Jennings for a 16-13 lead. Moody's extra point was blocked.

Niners coach Kyle Shanahan gambled on fourth-and-3 from the Chiefs 15, passing up a chance for a tying field goal. Purdy hit George Kittle for a 4-yard gain and then found Jennings for the score.

Shanahan resorted to trickery for the only touchdown in the first half.

Jennings, a wide receiver who had never thrown a pass in an NFL game, tossed a 21-yard TD to McCaffrey. He was hit as he threw, but McCaffrey snagged the wobbly pass across the field and sprinted to the end zone.

Shanahan fell to 0-2 as a head coach in Super Bowls and 0-3 overall, including a loss when he was offensive coordinator for Atlanta. That was the game in which Brady and the Patriots rallied from a 28-3 deficit to win in OT.

There were plenty of stars in the building as the NFL brought its biggest game to America's showcase capital. Jay-Z, LeBron James and Paul McCartney were among many celebrities in the crowd.

Post Malone sang "America the Beautiful," Reba McEntire performed the national anthem and Usher electrified the crowd at halftime. He brought out a number of guests, including Alicia Keys, H.E.R., Jermaine Dupri, Lil Jon and Ludacris.

Attendance was announced at 61,629, the smallest crowd in Super Bowl history except for the pandemic game in Tampa, Florida, three years ago.

Super Bowl madness: Thriller in OT, comeback win, and 'Tay-Tay'

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Super Bowl game that had it all—overtime, a comeback win, Taylor Swift, and not to mention, a shirtless Usher.

It seemed like everyone on Saipan were at Super Bowl watch parties yesterday—eager to bear witness to a wild Super Bowl LVIII showdown between the Kansas City Chiefs and the San Francisco 49ers, (and yes, catch a glimpse of Taylor Swift).

Public school was out in the CNMI and so were football fans of all ages who made the most of it on a mad Monday that had no blues—except for 49ers fans.

In the four watch parties visited by *Saipan Tribune*, the consensus was that the 49ers will bring the Vince Lombardi trophy to the West Coast—where a big CNMI community resides. There were also some "Tay-Tay" (Taylor Swift) fans out, but the Chiefs were not the favorite in the CNMI.

In the end though, Taylor Swift stormed the field into the arms of her beloved Travis Kelce as he and Patrick Mahomes scooped the Chiefs' second-straight Super Bowl championship in a thriller OT.

Down south at the Pacific Islands Club Saipan, over 100 fans filled the sold-out Charley's Cabaret. Gridiron fans in different jerseys lit up the space with bright colors, but with 49ers the clear favorite to win.

Reymark Castro, Super Bowl watch party host, said PIC was home to Chiefs fans in the past, but this year, the 49ers took over. Guests were treated to breakfast, lunch buffet, raffle tickets, and a chance to win on the square board, one free beer, giveaways, discounted drink specials and cash prizes, along with the grand prize of a night's stay at PIC.

At Saipan World Resort, the Taga Hall had a huge projection of the game on the stage.

Guy Pudney, resident manager of MARPAC who sponsored PIC, World Resort, and Hyatt's watch parties, was seen watching the game.

Despite a decrease in number this year, Pudney said it was still a great turnout at World Resort with over 60 guests. "Everyone's coming out. From what I understand, there's a lot of 49ers fans on Saipan… I've noticed for some reason, there's a lot of females cheering this year and I think it has something to do with Taylor Swift," he said.

One fan, Raquel Aguon, was out watching with her husband and friends and sporting a 49ers jersey. Her loyalty was stronger for the 49ers as she said she was a Taylor Swift fan, but more so a 49ers fan because she once lived in the Bay Area with her husband.

When asked how the game was so far—with at the time of the interview—the game was at 10-3, she said, "We really don't know what's going to happen, but as a 49er faithful, you believe in your team and push through 'til the end."

Hyatt Regency Saipan by far had the largest watch party turnout with a sold-out number of 160 gridiron faithful.

Marketing and Communications manager Bea O'Malley said of their turnout, "It's great. People are coming back. We have a really good turnout this year compared to last year. We're out of COVID so we have more people now."

She said that Hyatt is always excited with their partnership with MARPAC during the Super Bowl. "This year is special because we did a lot of preparation—especially with the big screens because we know the Super Bowl is huge. The visuals have to be awesome," said O'Malley.

Food & Beverage director Seiji Shindo said they had a huge selection of food and drinks that hungry fans feasted on while watching the game.

Over at the Godfather's Bar, with still more 49ers fans, one fan—Tim Kerr—cheered for the Chiefs. He even went as far as writing "Tay-Tay" on his chest and "Chiefs" on his belly. There were also women fans inside the bar who jokingly said they were watching just for Taylor Swift, but took it back and said they were actually fans of both teams.

Overall, good vibes, alcohol, and delicious food reigned on Monday, as the sporting community day-drunk their way to start the week—a great note for Chiefs' fans and a disappointing one for 49ers faithfuls.

LEIGH GASES

San Francisco 49'ers and Kansas City Chiefs fans gather together at Super Bowl watch parties all over Saipan, with about 160 guests at Hyatt Regency Saipan yesterday.

LEIGH GASES

San Francisco 49'ers fans pose for a photo at the Super Bowl watch party at the Saipan World Resort yesterday.

LEIGH GASES

San Francisco 49'ers and Kansas City Chiefs fans gather together at Super Bowl watch parties all over Saipan, with a sold-out house at Hyatt Regency Saipan yesterday.

LEIGH GASES

Gridiron fans front and center at the San Francisco 49'ers and Kansas City Chiefs Super Bowl watch party at the Godfather's Bar yesterday.

LEIGH GASES

Gridiron fans of all ages are front and center at the San Francisco 49'ers and Kansas City Chiefs Saipan World Resort Super Bowl watch party yesterday.

LEIGH GASES

MARPAC staff including Rod Zandueta, left, poses for a photo at the Super Bowl watch party at the Saipan World Resort yesterday.

Tatum has 26 points and Celtics withstand late rally to beat Heat.

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Saipan Tribune
Sports

Super Bowl madness: Thriller in OT, comeback win, and 'Tay-Tay'.

PAGE 19

Mahomes rallies KC Chiefs to 2nd straight Super Bowl title

By ROB MAADDI
AP PRO FOOTBALL WRITER

LAS VEGAS (AP)—Patrick Mahomes, Travis Kelce and the Kansas City Chiefs are back-to-back Super Bowl champions.

» **Wins 25-22 over 49ers in overtime**

Mahomes threw a 3-yard touchdown pass to Mecole Hardman in overtime, and the Chiefs rallied to beat the San Francisco 49ers 25-22 on Sunday, becoming the first repeat Super Bowl champs in 19 years and ninth overall.

With pop star Taylor Swift watching boyfriend Kelce from a suite, the Chiefs captured their third title in five years and firmly established themselves as a dynasty.

The NFL's first Super Bowl in Las Vegas was a sloppy, mistake-filled affair that was mostly boring until the back-and-forth fourth quarter and OT. It was the second of 58 Super Bowls to be tied after regulation, and the first played under new overtime rules that ensured both teams got the ball.

The Chiefs (15-6) trailed 22-19 after Jake Moody kicked a 27-yard field goal on the first possession of overtime, but Mahomes rallied the Chiefs, completing another impressive comeback in a rematch of the Super Bowl four years ago.

Mahomes ran 8 yards on fourth-and-1 to keep the Chiefs' chances alive and then scrambled 19 yards to set up the winning score, which came 14:57 into the extra period—just before what would have been the second OT.

"With all the adversity we've been through this season to come through tonight. ... I'm proud of the guys," said Mahomes, who was named MVP. "This is awesome. Legendary."

After he connected with a wide-open Hardman, the Chiefs ran on the field as red-and-yellow confetti fell onto the turf.

The most excitement in the first half came when a frustrated Kelce bumped Andy Reid on the sideline, knocking the Chiefs' 65-year-old coach a few steps back after teammate Isiah Pacheco fumbled inside the red zone during the second quarter.

"You guys saw that?" Kelce said. "I'm going to keep it between us unless my 'mic'd up' tells the world. I was just telling him how much I loved him."

The action picked up after a crucial blunder by San Francisco's special teams set up Mahomes' 16-yard TD pass to Marquez Valdes-Scantling for a 13-10 lead.

Brock Purdy and the 49ers (14-6) answered but they couldn't make enough plays, denying Mr. Irrelevant an opportunity to go from last pick in the 2022 NFL draft to Super Bowl champion.

Mahomes and Reid are now halfway to Tom Brady and Bill Belichick, who won six championships in 20 years together with the New England Patriots and were the most recent team to go back-to-back following the 2003-04 seasons.

The 28-year-old Mahomes becomes the fourth starting QB to win three Super Bowls—joining Brady, Joe Montana, Terry Bradshaw and Troy Aikman—and second-youngest.

Niners wide receiver Jauan Jennings threw a TD pass and caught one, joining Eagles quarterback Nick Foles six years ago as the only players to do both

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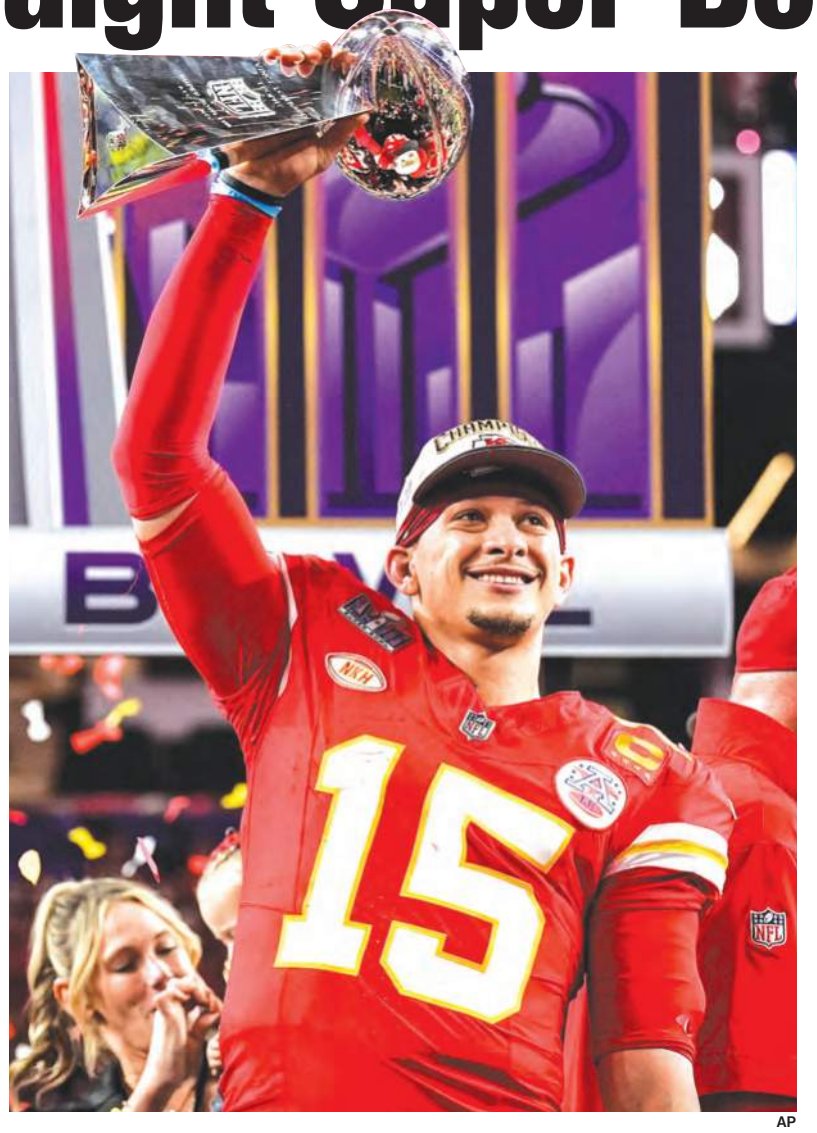

AP

Kansas City Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes (15) celebrates after the NFL Super Bowl 58 football game against the San Francisco 49ers, Sunday, Feb. 11, 2024, in Las Vegas.

Kyle Shanahan experiences third Super Bowl heartbreak

By JOSH DUBOW
AP PRO FOOTBALL WRITER

LAS VEGAS (AP)—Coach Kyle Shanahan's third trip to the Super Bowl ended up just like his first two—a major disappointment after another blown late lead.

The San Francisco 49ers coach has developed an offense that teams around the league try to mimic and has a vast coaching tree that makes him one of the most influential figures in the game at the young age of 44.

He just doesn't have a Super Bowl title after San Francisco squandered two late leads and lost 25-22 in overtime to the Kansas City Chiefs in the Super Bowl on Sunday.

"I don't care how you lose. When you lose Super Bowls, especially ones when you think you can pull it off, it hurts," Shanahan said. "When you're in the NFL, I think every team should hurt except for one at the end. We've gotten pretty damn close but haven't pulled it off. We're hurting right now."

This loss follows a blown 10-point lead by Shanahan's 49ers in the fourth quarter of the Super Bowl four years ago against Kansas City and an even bigger col-

See KYLE on Page 18

AP

San Francisco 49ers head coach Kyle Shanahan watches play against the Kansas City Chiefs during the first half of the NFL Super Bowl 58 football game Sunday, Feb. 11, 2024, in Las Vegas.

Travis Kelce brings home hardware, holds up 'end of the bargain' with Taylor Swift

By W.G. RAMIREZ
ASSOCIATED PRESS

LAS VEGAS (AP)—Travis Kelce brought home the hardware he promised to girlfriend Taylor Swift.

The Kansas City tight end finished with nine receptions for 93 yards, including a crucial catch in overtime, to help the Chiefs win their second straight Super Bowl with a 25-22 victory over the San Francisco 49ers on Sunday night.

One play after Kelce's reception put the Chiefs on the 3-yard line, Patrick Mahomes found Mecole Hardman alone in the end zone for the winning TD, in the process helping Kelce keep his promise while sending Swift and everyone in her suite into a celebratory frenzy.

"Never a doubt in my mind," Kelce said. "We've got the best quarterback in the league, we've got the best offensive line in the league, and we've got the most determination out of any team in the NFL and you saw all that tonight.

"I guess at this point I take it for granted, but I know we're in every single game I've ever played in, no matter what the score is or no matter how much time is left, that guy's got magic in his right arm."

One night after Swift earned her fourth career Grammy for album of the year last week, Kelce said he told her he'd "have to hold up my end of the bargain and bring home some hardware, too."

Swift flew halfway around the world to watch her boyfriend, who also said during the Super Bowl week's opening night on Monday, "I want this one more than I've ever wanted a Super Bowl before in my life."

See TRAVIS on Page 18

AP

Kansas City Chiefs tight end Travis Kelce (87) hugs his girlfriend Taylor Swift after the team's victory over the San Francisco 49ers during the NFL Super Bowl 58 football game Sunday, Feb. 11, 2024, in Las Vegas.